

**FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT**  
**Institutional Quality Assurance Program (IQAP) Review**  
**Theatre and Film Studies**  
**Undergraduate Program**

**Date of Review:** March 17 – March 18, 2016

*In accordance with the University Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), this final assessment report provides a synthesis of the external evaluation and the internal response and assessments of the undergraduate **Theatre and Film Studies** program delivered by the **School of the Arts**. This report identifies the significant strengths of the programs, together with opportunities for program improvement and enhancement, and it sets out and prioritizes the recommendations that have been selected for implementation.*

*The report includes an Implementation Plan that identifies who will be responsible for approving the recommendations set out in the Final Assessment Report; who will be responsible for providing any resources entailed by those recommendations; any changes in organization, policy or governance that will be necessary to meet the recommendations and who will be responsible for acting on those recommendations; and timelines for acting on and monitoring the implementation of those recommendations.*

**Executive Summary of the Cyclical Program Review of the**  
**Theatre and Film Studies Program**

In accordance with the Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), the School of the Arts submitted a self-study in January 2016 to the Associate Vice-President, Faculty to initiate the cyclical program review of its Theatre and Film Studies program. The approved self-study presented program descriptions, learning outcomes, and analyses of data provided by the Office of Institutional Research and Analysis. Appendices to the self-study contained all course outlines associated with the program and the CVs for each full-time member in the department.

Two arm's length external reviewers from Ontario and one internal reviewer were endorsed by the Dean, Faculty of Humanities, and selected by the Associate Vice-President, Faculty. The review team reviewed the self-study documentation and then conducted a site visit to McMaster University on March 17 – March 18, 2016. The visit included interviews with the Provost and Vice-President (Academic); Associate Vice-President, Faculty, Chair of the department and meetings with groups of current undergraduate students, full-time faculty and support staff.

The Chair of the department and the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities submitted responses to the Reviewers' Report (October 2016). Specific recommendations were discussed and clarifications and corrections were presented. Follow-up actions and timelines were included.

The Final Assessment Report was prepared by the Quality Assurance Committee to be submitted to Undergraduate Council, and Senate (December 2016).

### Strengths

In their report (June 2016), the Review Team noted that the in-depth experiential learning opportunities engage students through innovative and collaborative creative projects that successfully intersect with the wider community. The reviewers were especially taken with the program's concentration in devised theatre. Much of their evaluation was filtered through supporting and building further this central component of the program.

### Areas for Improvement

- Communicate more precisely, to the student body and the wider public, what the aims and goals of the program are, with an emphasis on strengths in teaching devising processes.
- A more clearly articulated vision of the relationship of courses within the program.
- A more structured process for supporting ongoing learning in the technical aspects of performance creation.

The Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, in consultation with the Director of the School of the Arts shall be responsible for monitoring the recommendations implementation plan. The details of the progress made will be presented in the progress report and filed in the Associate Vice-President, Faculty's office.

### Summary of the Reviewers' Recommendations with the Department's and the Dean's Responses

#### Recommendations

| Recommendation                                   | Proposed Follow-Up   | Responsibility for Leading Follow-Up   | Timeline for Addressing Recommendation |
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| Revisit the core values and goals of the program | Faculty in the program, in consultation with current students and the director of SOTA, will meet over the course of the coming year to discuss how to better articulate the relationship of the different analytic methods, media, and performance practices we teach in the program. By September 2017, we | Theatre & Film Studies Program Committee (the committee includes the four permanent faculty members who teach in the program). | To begin in 2016-2017 session.         |

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|   | <p>will produce a new description of the program to help prospective and current students, as well as our colleagues, better understand the goals and practices of the program. We will disseminate the new program description through SOTA's website and through the university's academic calendar.</p>   |   |                              |
| <p>Re-affirm and strengthen the focus on performance and situate what students learn within the parameters outlined in the IQAP, that is, within the practices of international devising/creation companies (such as <i>Complicite</i>, <i>Frantic Assembly</i>, etc., as outline in 3.1 p. 19). This will help further position what it is unique about the program.</p> | <p>We appreciate the reviewers' suggestion that we might increase our focus on internationalization through more discussion of well-known international devising companies. To date, we have done this by using the companies mentioned as examples within courses from Levels I to III. This is largely because our approach to internationalization has not focused as much on a coverage model as it has on teaching students basic skills in cross-cultural collaboration and analysis, often through looking at how colonization and globalization have affected Canadian performance and media practices. We will consider whether this skill set should be separated out and taught as an</p> | <p>Theatre &amp; Film Studies Program Committee</p> | <p>To begin in 2016-2017</p> |

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|   | independent course at Level III.   |   |                               |
| Improve the outreach and publicity of program events to the university and wider community. For example, simple measures such as regular events listing updates to the program and SOTA website should be undertaken. | As part of SOTA's ongoing efforts to increase its public profile, we will work with the director and SOTA staff to find a more effective way to do outreach to communities within and outside the university that might have a particular interest in different performance events and exhibitions we are organizing. We also look forward to further changes to SOTA's website that will make it easier to publicize events. The Theatre & Film program remains convinced that the program and the School as a whole requires specialized outreach expertise that is not currently available in SOTA or the university as a whole. Arts outreach is about community building and depends on relationships being developed consistently over time. It requires a strategy carefully developed by an outreach professional working in close conjunction with the program(s) and the local communities we wish to reach. | Director of SOTA and Theatre & Film Studies Program Committee | To begin in 2016-2017 session |
| Re-examine teaching duties in the program. Given the emphasis in the program on creative  | Several course taught by faculty members who do not teach studio-based courses   | Theatre & Film Studies Program Committee                      | To begin in 2016-17 session   |

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| <p>devising are students exposed to as many influences as possible in this stream? Are there ways in which all faculty in the program could be contributing to the devising stream courses?</p>  | <p>already offer emphases on creative practices used in devising. For example, the Level II course, "Culture and Performance" addresses devising by focusing on analysis of how performance art practitioners develop their creative methods. A new course, "Visual Storytelling", taught for the first time in 2016-17 addresses devised, digital film creation. More generally, the Program will meet and reflect on ways we can encourage students to integrate material covered in different kinds of courses, whether through adjustments to course content, to pedagogical approaches, or to changes in the types of assignments required. We will seek to strengthen the program through an intersection of ideas and methods across courses.</p> |   |                                      |
| <p>Consider an evaluative process for admission (other than an audition) to the devising courses that would help students think about and prepare for the collaborative and challenging nature of performance creation they are going to</p> | <p>Currently, there is an evaluative process in place for admission to the two central production courses: 3S03 Major Production Workshop and 4A06: Theatre and Society: A Performance Project. Our program is open by design to allow students</p>  | <p>Theatre &amp; Film Studies Program Committee</p> | <p>To begin in 2016-2017 session</p> |

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| <p>undertake.</p>   | <p>to explore a variety of processes involved in performance creation. As a BA program, rather than a BFA, we feel this is entirely appropriate.</p>  |  |                                    |
| <p>SOTA and Theatre &amp; Film faculty and staff need to work closely with the Wilson building implementation team to advocate for the proper staffing and management of the new performance and teaching spaces.</p> | <p>The dean of the Faculty of Humanities has already struck a new committee of users for the New Media and Performance Hub (the Black Box Theatre) and we look forward to collaborating with staff and faculty to advocate for proper staffing and management. The Theatre &amp; Film program stands by its argument in our IQAP report that maximizing the potential of this space will require additional technical and administrative staff: namely a Production Manager/Technical Director and Arts Administrator. We believe the reviewers' criticism of preparations for use of the space acknowledges this necessity. We are surprised that there is no mention of the need for a research position in design for the program, which was identified as a pressing need in our 2010 Undergraduate Program Review and continues to be the case today. There is an urgency about making recommendations concerning the best use</p> | <p>Some faculty members from the program;<br/>Director of SOTA;<br/>Associate Dean</p> | <p>To begin in 2016-17 session</p> |

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|  | <p>of the space (activities) and to determine its governance (staffing support).</p>  |  |                                    |
| <p>The Theatre &amp; Film Studies program should be re-designated as the Theatre, Performance and Film Studies Program</p> | <p>We suggest the name should in fact be changed to “Theatre, Film, and Performance Studies.” The faculty feel that the program might best be characterized as a Performance Studies program and this aligns us well with the latest developments in local graduate programs, e.g. University of Toronto’s Graduate Centre for the Study of Drama has been renamed the Centre for Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies and York University’s graduate program is in Theatre and Performance Studies. Our proposed renaming therefore leaves the two subjects that prospective students recognize in the title, but still works to break the binary of theatre and film that has led students and reviewers to believe we are teaching two separate disciplines rather than an integrated program that explores the relationships between a range of performance modes. Finally, the new name will also directly align our program with the Wilson buildings New Media and</p> | <p>Director of SOTA and Theatre &amp; Film Studies Program Committee</p> | <p>To begin in 2016-17 session</p> |

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|   | Performance Hub.  |  |   |
| The THTRFLM 3S03 Major Production Workshop should be developed from a 3-credit to a 6-credit one-term course  | The program agrees with this recommendation and is in the process of submitting the change to the curriculum committee in Fall 2016   | A representative of Theatre & Film Studies Program Committee will meet with the associate dean of the Faculty of Humanities and the director of SOTA | To begin in 2016-17 Faculty curricular sessions   |
| Technical skills training can no longer be acquired in a haphazard and unstructured manner and a 3-credit one-term basic skills training course (including, amongst other aspects, stage management, light and sound design) as preparatory for all devising courses should be mandatory. | This recommendation appears to stem from a misunderstanding. The program already has such a course at Level II, 2BB3 "Designing as Devising", with an average enrolment of 35 out of a possible 40 spaces. While students learn the basic skills the reviewers are concerned with in this course, they need more support to implement technical and design skills in performance creation processes in order to develop mastery. In the devising model at the core of our approach, breaking traditional silos between different elements of theatrical creation is a crucial part of our pedagogical process. In this kind of problem-based approach, students further develop design and technical skills as they need them to achieve different aesthetic goals. Such an approach calls for a more flexible model of technical support than is presently in place, as well as expert knowledge that is not | Program faculty will discuss possibilities with director of the School of the Arts and implement new training workshops for our devising courses.    | To begin in 2016-2017 Faculty curricular sessions |



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|  | <p>always available with our current faculty and staff complement. We would like to have the resources to hire additional technical support, as necessary, for example in costume design. The program will also consider using the discretionary funds available to us to hire guest artists to teach discrete workshops in areas of design and performance that would support particular performance creation processes. We will also look at ways to have the school technician available for resource support at hours necessitated by student schedules.</p> |  |  |
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**Faculty Response:**

The review team clearly identify the core strength of the program – its distinctive focus on “devising”, an approach to performance developed by a number of companies around the world. The reviewers at the outset express concern that the approach of this program of four full time faculty may be overly-ambitious.

I support the attached response of the School of the Arts and faculty members in the program. I would add only a few comments to that response.

The faculty members believe that the reviewers’ main concern represented a misunderstanding of the role of film in the program. Rather than dismiss this concern, however, I am very impressed that they are eager to better articulate and communicate that this is not a program in film studies, but a program in which film is part of the focus on devising and performance. And, as part of that review, they will consider some proposals to ensure that the focus on devising is front and centre.

The reviewers rightly were concerned about planning for the use of the new Performance and New Media Hub (the black box theatre) in Wilson Hall. Anticipated delays in the opening of this space, and a focus on ensuring that the theatre was properly equipped, meant that this level of operational planning was postponed. I now have struck a committee composed of members of the Theatre and Film and Multimedia programs, including technical staff, which is supported by a member of the Dean’s Office.

They have adopted a series of principles surrounding the use of the space, and currently are working through the practical arrangements needed to support those principles. As Dean, I am also in the process of having a consultant familiar with the program and both the new theatre and the Concert Hall to help develop models for ensuring that the technical and other support needed to run the spaces meets health and safety standards and the learning needs of students.

I look forward to reporting progress on the detailed response of the faculty members, and on the general state of the program. The opening of the new shared space in Wilson Hall represents a great opportunity to highlight and build on the strengths of this program around devising, and to strengthen connections to Multimedia and other programs in the Faculty.

#### **Quality Assurance Committee Recommendation**

That the Quality Assurance Committee recommend that the undergraduate Theatre and Film Studies program should follow the regular course of action with an 18-month progress report and a subsequent full external cyclical review to be conducted no later than 8 years after the start of the last review.