



## FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

### Criticism and Curatorial Practice, Graduate Studies

<b>Prepared by:</b>	Senate Quality Assurance Committee
<b>Period of Cyclical Review:</b>	01 July 2015 - 30 June 2016 01 July 2016 - 30 June 2017 (Program team established in July 2015)
<b>Dean, Graduate Studies</b>	Michael Prokopow (Interim)
<b>Program Review Team Lead:</b>	Professor Andrea Fatona
<b>External Reviewers:</b>	Dr. Bruce A. Barber, Professor Nova Scotia College of Art and Design University (NSCAD)  Dr. Dominic Hardy, Professor, Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM)  Associate Professor Judith Doyle, Faculty of Art, OCAD University  External review process took place on site between 16 January and 17 January 2017. (Report submitted 16 March 2017).

#### Part 1: Synthesis of Review Documents:

a) **Summary of Cyclical Program Review:** This is the first institutional review of the Criticism and Curatorial Practice (CCP) graduate program and one of the first of the reviews of OCAD University's graduate programs to be undertaken in the context of the new Institutional Quality Assurance Process that was implemented in 2011. The self-study exercise affirmed that the Master's of Fine Arts (MFA) program in criticism and curatorial practice "fosters a dynamic and complementary relationship between theory and practice in contemporary art criticism and curatorial practice. The Program Review Team, under the leadership of Professor Andrea Fatona was marked by widespread consultations with faculty, students and staff. The external review identified many

program strengths and some concerning weaknesses or vulnerabilities that require consideration and action.

## **Part 2: Strengths, Challenges, and Recommendations:**

The External Review of CCP offered sharply observed praise for the program suggesting that the educational mission of the innovative and path-breaking program was being honoured in its curriculum, its signature relationship with the Art Gallery of Ontario. In short, students in the program are well served. This said, the review did identify three areas that need to be addressed: the issue of admissions, recruitment and retention (mindful of the externally-imposed restrictions on the size of the program cohort), the issue of what can be described as curricular lop-sidedness (meaning the program's heavy emphasis on criticism and limited offerings in curatorial theory and related matters) and the isolation of the program students from the often rich curricular offerings of the MA program in Contemporary Art, Design and New Media and other graduate programs at the university. Concerns were raised about the physical spaces used for the delivery of the program – in particular the CCP designated offices/studio located on the Gallery level of 205 Richmond Street – and the silo effects on student engagement and overall morale.

## **Part 3: Implementation Plan and Conclusion:**

### **a) Implementation Plan:**

#### Recommendations

Admissions, recruitment and retention

It is clear that the artificially managed size of annual cohorts is a problem. Not only does it result in a program that while intimate, is problematically small. Students take the vast majority of their classes together and so there is the threat of intellectual over-familiarity and a stifling of critical exchange. Discussions have been taking place since 2013 about ways to change the size of the program and, in consequence, broaden and change up the profile of applicants and admitted students. The Office of Graduate Studies must also do more (in consultation with the graduate program director and the program committee) to communicate via the program (and graduate studies) website the range of faculty expertise that defines the program.

Curriculum Development

Curricular imbalance, coupled with an overly heavy roster of mandatory courses is a serious problem for the program. A reduction in the number of required courses (mindful of the issue of credit weighting and accrual) would grant students more flexibility in their degree work. Students could develop their areas of expertise through the taking of

specialized electives and thus gain areas specialization that will aid them in their capstone projects and post-degree professions. That there is a heavy (overly heavy) emphasis on art criticism (and art writing to some degree) means that courses on curatorial theory and practice are insufficient in number. Additionally, instruction in such areas as exhibition design, exhibition planning and other aspects of gallery/museum work would enhance the curricular depth of the program and provide students with greater autonomy in the construction of a course of study and area of focused (and experiential) learning. The question of the institution providing more financial support to students who are mounting exhibitions is also a concern. Lastly, the composition of advising committees would be beneficially considered. Whereas in the past MRP advising committees were composed of three faculty members, this number was reduced to two. The external review team did raise the idea of returning to committees of three. And with the institutional changes to the work of advising, so it might be possible to take up this recommendation in viable ways.

#### Physical Resources requirements

The program currently operates out of somewhat constrained spaces at 205 Richmond. A review of program space is needed.

### IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Recommendation and Proposed Actions	Outcomes and Indicators	Responsibility and Other Stakeholders	Implementation Date/Timeline
<b>Admissions, recruitment and retention</b>  Manage size of program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change the circumstances that govern / regulate the size of the annual program intake. (Work has already commenced in this area).</li> </ul>	Interest in the program suggests that the cohort size could easily grow. Given the initiatives undertaken by the CCP program committee to introduce a museum practice/studies stream into the curriculum should effectively broaden the applicant pool.	Dean/ Graduate Studies / Graduate Program Director	2017-2020
<b>Curriculum development</b>  The external report emphasized that the curriculum overly favours courses about criticism		Graduate Program Director /	2017- 2018- 2018 - 2019

<p>at the expense of courses about curatorial theory and practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The program will undertake a careful consideration of how best to revise the curriculum to address this imbalance</li> <li>• The reduction of the number of required courses (core courses) is necessary. Students have registered their dissatisfaction at the relative lack of flexibility they have to fashion their own intellectual journey in the program.</li> </ul>	<p>Revising the curriculum imbalance will offer students more choice of courses and allow them to gain vital expertise in the areas of curatorial practice.</p> <p>Reconfiguring the curricular map, changing the weighting of course (if necessary), the introduction of new courses on curatorial practice, art writing, exhibition design and museum practice will improve the intellectual and critical currency of the program.</p>	<p>curriculum Committee / Graduate Studies Curriculum Committee and Senate Graduate Studies Curriculum Committee</p>	
<p><b>Physical Resources</b></p> <p>The external review raised the question of the efficacy of the CCP space for the purposes of student learning and for their work of what is a studio-based practice. A review of the question of how best for the institution/program to provide space appropriate to the program's curricular goals will be undertaken (mindful of the overall issues of space and its allocation in the institution).</p>	<p>An assessment of current space allocation and usage may reveal either adequate offering or provide guidance as to where changes and/or improvements are required.</p>	<p>VP Finance and Administration / Dean of Graduate Studies/ Graduate Program Director</p>	<p>2017-2018 2018-2019</p>

**b) Conclusion:** The Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC) was provided with the documents pertaining to the Criticism and Curatorial Practice cyclical review, including the Self-study Brief; the responses of the Interim Dean, Graduate Studies and the Vice-President, Academic and Provost; the External Reviewer Report; and the program review team's Internal Response Report. In their review of this final report they provided suggestions to strengthen the document and with those considerations recognized, recommended the report to Senate for approval. The report received approval from Senate on October 30, 2017.