



FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Digital Futures Graduate Program, Graduate Studies

In accordance with the Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), the Final Assessment Report summarizes the results of the cyclical program review self-study and external review processes, and makes recommendations that will focus the future work of the program based on the reports received. It is reviewed by the Senate Quality Assurance Committee and approved by Senate.

Prepared by:	Senate Quality Assurance Committee
Period of Cyclical Review:	July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2018
Dean, Graduate Studies:	Ashok Mathur
Program Review Team Lead:	Martha Ladly Kate Hartman
External Reviewers:	Amber Frid-Jimenez, Emily Carr University Lennart E. Nacke, University of Waterloo Michele Mastroeni, OCAD University

Executive Summary of Cyclical Program Review

The self-study process took place in 2016-17 and was led by the Graduate Program Director Dr. Martha Ladly. The Self-Study Brief was also prepared by Dr. Ladly in consultation with the IQAP team: Joshua Paglione (Program Coordinator), and faculty members Kate Hartman, Immony Men, Cindy Poremba, Nick Puckett, Adam Tindale, and Emma Westecott. The External Review visit took place and the Internal Response document was prepared in 2018 by Graduate Program Director Kate Hartman, also in consultation with the full IQAP team including Dr. Ladly.

The External Review Report highlights strengths and challenges and provided recommendations that were very much in keeping with those identified in the original self-study document. The reviewers provide an overall affirming assessment of the development of the Digital Futures Graduate Program to date while clearly identifying target areas for improvement. They indicate that our program objectives are consistent with OCADU's current Academic Plan, specifically "disciplinary porosity and cross-fertilization (priority 5), language, digital and business skills and technology-enabled learning (priority 8), enhancing the Graduate School

(priority 13) and research (priority 14)". They also confirm that our program requirements and learning outcomes align with degree-level expectations. The Internal Response indicates agreement on the part of the internal IQAP team and provides proposed responses to the recommendations made in the External Review Report.

Strengths and Challenges

Strengths

- **Admissions:** Admissions requirements have been confirmed by both the self-study report and the External Review Report to be well-aligned with the learning outcomes of the program. After initial start-up fluctuations our intake numbers have now stabilized. Our program is also noted as attracting a large number of strong international applicants.
- **Curriculum:** In the area of curriculum, the reviewers acknowledge our "significant creative approaches in the content and delivery of the program relative to other programs," including "an intention to focus on diversity and inclusion in the context of computational media art and design pedagogy, opportunities for students to participate in grant-funded research programs of innovative artistic and design research labs directed by faculty, unique opportunities for students to gain from and contribute to partnerships with local organizations..."
- **Faculty:** The reviewers also state that "DF Faculty members continue to identify and deliver curricula that is highly relevant to modes of creative production in contemporary digital fields and speculative futures. Faculty continue to demonstrate that they have the capacity to teach at a high quality in innovative ways." The reviewers also acknowledge ongoing improvements in leadership and faculty cohesion and identify it as "a major strength of the program going forward".

Challenges

- **Curriculum:** The self-study report identifies the need for ongoing curriculum renewal and both the self-study and the external reviewer report identify the need to clarify and simplify the program via the program requirements. These changes are already underway, with the first phase having been proposed and approved in the 2018-19 academic year and more lined up for 2019-20.
- **Faculty Support and Workload:** The reviewers articulate concern about the workload of our faculty and advocate for improved "training, mentorship, and availability of professional development for faculty instructors and thesis supervisors" in addition to faculty hires. We agree that the positioning of our program requires more substantial support for our faculty to keep their knowledge and skills up to date. The reviewers also recommend the continued increase in faculty hires, and in the diversity of our faculty hires, which is well-supported by OCADU's current Academic Plan and current hiring policy.
- **Resources:** There is repeated and strong emphasis in both the self-study and the external review report on the improvements needed in the areas of equipment, technology, space, and technician support. These needs are consistent across both the Digital Futures

graduate and undergraduate programs. Both of these technology-focused programs were launched with minimal technical equipment, resources, and support and it is time that these issues be addressed.

- **General Graduate Studies Issues:** Challenges related to graduate supervision, writing support, and support for international students are identified as key areas for improvement. These topics pertain to graduate programs across OCAD University. To address these we will work closely with the Graduate Studies office and directors of all graduate programs.

Implementation Plan:

Category	External Reviewer Recommendation	Proposed Follow-Up	Responsibility and Other Stakeholders	Implementation Date / Timeline
Admissions, recruitment and retention	Increase opportunities for Research Assistant and Teaching Assistantships.	<p>Work with Graduate Studies office to expand upon the efforts initiated in Winter 2018 to secure more Teaching Assistantship opportunities for incoming graduate students.</p> <p>Consult Research Office for guidance in how to better align research programs with entrance scholarships.</p> <p>Apply for collaborative research funding opportunities (with multiple DF faculty) that can align with admissions cycle.</p> <p>Allocate time in faculty or program meetings to discuss upcoming research projects, lab initiatives, and potential RAships.</p>	Graduate Program Director, Dean of Graduate Studies, Research Office	Ongoing.
Admissions, recruitment and retention	Review the use of terms “innovation” and “innovative” in admissions criteria.	Review and update admission criteria with DF Graduate Program Committee and update accordingly. These terms must either be more clearly defined within the masters context or removed in favour of more appropriate language.	Graduate Program Director & Graduate Program Committee	Winter 2019

Admissions, recruitment and retention	Require students to declare which faculty member(s) they would like to work with as a Principal Advisor as part of the admissions process.	As of Fall 2018 the request for this information has been added to the admissions process in the form of a required question the Slideroom application.	Graduate Program Director & Graduate Program Committee	Completed Fall 2018.
Admissions, recruitment and retention	Promote the work and stories of DF graduate students as a way to better attract funding and new graduate students.	Work with GPD, GPC, Graduate Studies Digital Storyteller, and Marketing and Communication to better communicate and present the student stories and work coming out of the DF Grad program. Create a dedicated DF Grad Thesis website, possibly also a general Projects website.	Graduate Program Director & Graduate Program Coordinator, Marketing & Communications	Ongoing. Thesis Project website was developed and launched in Fall 2018.
Admissions, recruitment and retention	Continue to assess alignment (or lack thereof) between applicant interest areas and program strengths.	Work with DF Grad Program Committee to assess our coverage and support for new and/or innovative areas of development. Use findings to contribute to discussions about future hires as well as professional development for existing faculty. Work with Admissions Committee to identify and make note of candidates who may be getting turned because their interests do not fit "well" within program strengths.	Graduate Program Director & Graduate Program Committee	Ongoing.
Admissions, recruitment and retention	Increase number of students who identify as racialized.	Continue to increase number of tenure-track and tenured DF faculty hires, especially amongst those who identify as Indigenous and as racialized. Create mentorship and role model opportunities for students who identify as BIPOC.	Graduate Program Director & Graduate Program Committee, All Deans, VPA	2019-2024

		<p>Support sessional and CLTA faculty who identify as visible minorities in transitioning to permanent positions.</p> <p>Work with Admissions & Recruitment and Graduate Studies office to identify strategies to attract a more diverse group of applicants.</p> <p>Look for ways to connect with prospective BIPOC students interested in new media, technology, and futures.</p> <p>Improve the visibility of work that is happening in our program already that relates to these topics.</p>		
Alumni	Create a DF Grad Alumni network.	<p>Work with OCADU Alumni Network, Graduate Studies office, and other relevant units to learn about best practices for establishing and maintaining a program-specific alumni network.</p> <p>Create DF Grad Alumni announcement mailing list.</p> <p>Determine best venue for DF Grad Alumni discussion forum, whether it be created via an additional mailing list or social media.</p>	Graduate Program Director & Graduate Program Committee	2019-21
Curriculum Development	Coordinate learning outcomes and course materials more effectively across the program.	<p>Create overall curriculum map of learning outcomes and skills / topics to determine how they are introduced and advanced. Determine a list of our core skills.</p> <p>Organize mechanisms for faculty to share what is being taught in their upcoming classes via faculty meetings</p>	Graduate Program Director & Graduate Program Committee	2019-21

		<p>prior to the start of term.</p> <p>Determine mechanisms for sharing what was taught in specific instantiations of courses.</p> <p>Facilitate handoffs between instructors who teach sequential courses, such as Creative Techniques and Research Methods as well as the Thesis 1-3 series. This already happens informally but could benefit from further attention and support.</p> <p>Increase the number of tenure-track and tenured faculty teaching required courses.</p> <p>Re-evaluate 0.25 credit classes. Reduce number of them. Consider using them for new explorations and restrict when they can run i.e. spring/summer.</p>		
Curriculum Development	Revise curriculum to reduce coursework requirements.	<p>Convert select required courses to electives to enable students to choose courses that best support their research and practice interests.</p> <p>Explore options for reducing overall course requirements.</p> <p>Review effectiveness of thesis courses.</p> <p>Explore alternative modes for integrating research assistantships into the curriculum.</p>	Graduate Program Director & Graduate Program Committee	<p>Conversion of required courses to elective proposed and approved in 2018-19.</p> <p>Other items will be reviewed in 2019-21.</p>
Curriculum Development	Discuss whether there is a need or want for	Consult Director of Academic Computing to assess	Graduate Program Director & Graduate	2019-20

	online or hybrid courses.	<p>feasibility of online or hybrid courses in DF Grad program.</p> <p>Review curriculum for opportunities to introduce this format of delivery, perhaps during spring / summer.</p>	<p>Program Committee Director of Academic Computing</p>	
Curriculum Development: Thesis	Address issues related to incentives for thesis supervision.	<p>Participate in and contribute to Graduate Studies-wide conversations about these issues. This is a GS-wide topic and not specific to Digital Futures. A task force has already been assembled to address this topic.</p> <p>Increase list of eligible supervisors by inviting additional eligible faculty from throughout the university.</p> <p>Review and assess affordances in DF's current thesis structure that might be used to better support the thesis process.</p>	<p>Graduate Program Director and Dean of Graduate Studies</p>	2019-21
Curriculum Development: Thesis	Reduce word count for thesis document.	<p>- Work with DF Graduate Program committee to revisit and revise overall thesis requirements and guidelines including word count.</p>	<p>Graduate Program Director & Graduate Program Committee</p>	Winter & Spring 2019
Quality of educational experience	Information about possible careers, goals, job vision and placement should be more clearly articulated and communicated to students.	<p>Develop and launch "DF Opportunities" mailing list to share opportunities with and from the DF community.</p> <p>Membership in this list will be available to current students and alumni of both the DF undergraduate and graduate programs.</p> <p>Within the new DF Alumni Network, develop a mechanism for capturing and sharing alumni activities and</p>	<p>Graduate Program Director & Graduate Program Committee</p> <p>Center for Emerging Artists and Designers</p>	<p>"DF Opportunities" mailing list was launched in 2018-19.</p> <p>Capturing & sharing alumni activities will be addressed in 2019-21.</p>

		news to serve as inspiration for current students.		
Quality of educational experience	Improve writing support within the program.	<p>Review existing writing workshops available within Graduate Studies to see whether they can be offered earlier or if there need to be more.</p> <p>Review DF courses with writing focus to see if more support can be provided.</p> <p>Connect with WLC to see if there are services available to graduate students that are being underutilized.</p>	Graduate Program Director & Graduate Program Committee	2019-21
Quality of educational experience	Orient students to OCADU intellectual property policies.	<p>Clarify and reiterate OCADU IP policy throughout the graduate experience, both in the classroom and in research assistantships.</p>	Graduate Program Director & Graduate Program Committee Research Office	2019-20
Quality of educational experience	Orient students to mechanisms for reporting concerns.	Clarify and reiterate structure for students to pursue their concerns. Be especially mindful when there are exceptions, such as a GPD or PA teaching a course.	Graduate Program Director & Graduate Program Committee	2019-20
Faculty	Support professional development for faculty specific to contemporary and emerging technologies.	<p>Allocate funding (from existing program budget or through fundraising) for program-specific professional development intended to directly support teaching. This could fund both workshops for faculty and/or special professional development funds for DF Grad faculty.</p> <p>Develop and implement faculty-only skill shares as well as open skill shares that include students.</p>	Graduate Program Director & Dean of Graduate Studies	2019-21
Faculty	Continue with improvements to leadership, faculty	Maintain regular contact between students and faculty outside of the classroom to	Graduate Program Director	2019-2022

	<p>cohesion, and communication.</p>	<p>foster the development of culture and community within the program.</p> <p>Create diverse opportunities for DF faculty to connect with each other beyond program committee meetings.</p> <p>Work to encourage communication between course instructors at critical junctures.</p> <p>Keep faculty well-informed of decisions and changes being made to the delivery of the program and present opportunities for input, feedback, and discussion.</p>		
Human resource requirement	Improve access to technicians so as to better match and support the overall mandate of the program.	Hire a full-time permanent technician or technicians to support the technical needs specific to Digital Futures.	<p>Graduate Program Director</p> <p>Dean of Graduate Studies</p> <p>DF Undergrad Chair & Dean of FoLASSIS</p> <p>Director of Facilities & Studios</p> <p>Office of Development</p>	2020-2024
Physical resource requirements	Improve overall access to space, equipment and technologies, so as to better match and support the overall mandate of the program.	<p>Existing Resources</p> <p>Work with OCADU AV to improve equipment access for students.</p> <p>Align equipment acquisition plan with student research projects where possible.</p> <p>Make a clear process for students to gain access to resources in OCADU research labs.</p>	<p>Graduate Program Director, Graduate Program Committee, Dean of Graduate Studies</p> <p>DF Undergrad Chair & Dean of FoLASSIS</p> <p>Director of Academic Computing, Director of Facilities & Studios, VP of Research, VPA,</p>	<p>Existing Resources: 2019-21</p> <p>New Resources: Fall 2020 Launch for the new space with incremental additions and improvements through 2024.</p>

	<p>Make a clear process for students to gain access to resources outside of the program in other parts of OCADU.</p> <p>Investigate temporary measures for increasing technician support for students.</p> <p>New Resources</p> <p>Create a new facility at 205 Richmond for a hands-on advanced digital fabrication and technology development.</p> <p>This facility will serve the needs of both the undergraduate and graduate Digital Futures programs as well as all of OCADU's graduate programs including IAMD, Inclusive Design, and Design for Health.</p> <p>It will be externally funded and will also include multiple support staff / technicians.</p> <p>This space and its associated resources will facilitate hands-on technology-driven research that spans advanced digital fabrication; virtual and mixed realities; robotics; artificial intelligence and machine learning; and advanced electronics prototyping and small-scale hardware manufacturing.</p>	Office of Development	
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Prioritization of Recommendations

Curriculum revisions are a top priority and are already underway.

The other top priority is improvements to the areas of equipment, technology, space, and technician support. The development, planning, and fundraising for this will be our primary initiative in the coming years.

Conclusion

The Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC) was provided with the documents pertaining to the Digital Futures graduate program cyclical review, including the self-study brief; the responses of the Dean, Graduate Studies and the Vice-President, Academic and Provost, the External Reviewer Report, and the Program Review and Dean's Internal Response. In their review of this final report, the committee provided minor suggestions to strengthen the document and with those considerations recognized, recommended the report to the Senate for approval. The report received approval from the Senate on February 25, 2019.