

# Final Assessment Report for the 2019-2020 Cyclical Program Review of Digital Media and Journalism

## INTRODUCTION

In accordance with Laurier's Institutional Quality Assurance Procedures ([Policy 2.1](#)), this Final Assessment Report provides a summary of the review process for the Digital Media and Journalism (DMJ) program prepared by the Quality Assurance Office, along with an identification of strengths of the program(s) under review authored by the Dean of the Liberal Arts. All recommendations made by the external review committee are listed in order, followed by a summary of the Program's response, and the Dean's response. Recommendations not approved for implementation have been identified, and those that have been prioritized are listed in the Implementation Plan.

The Final Assessment Report is reviewed and approved by the Vice-Provost: Teaching and Learning and the Provost and Vice-President: Academic. Following completion of the Final Assessment Report, it is approved by the Program Review Sub-Committee and Senate Academic Planning Committee. Approval dates are listed at the end of this report. Final Assessment Reports are submitted to Senate as part of an annual report on cyclical reviews, and to the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance for information. Final Assessment Reports and Implementation Reports are posted on the public-facing page of the [Quality Assurance Office](#) website.

The Implementation Plan for the recommendations prioritized in the Final Assessment Report can be found at the end of this report. Units will submit their first Implementation Report two years following approval of the Final Assessment Report at Senate. The Implementation Report will include comments from the unit on actions taken toward the completion of recommendations, comments from the relevant Dean(s) related to the progress made, and comments from the Program Review Sub-Committee, which is responsible for approving the Implementation Report and deciding if further reports are required. The Senate Academic Planning Committee will also approve the Implementation Report.

## SUMMARY OF REVIEW PROCESS

This was the second cyclical review for the Digital Media and Journalism program, which admitted its first cohort of students in 2005. The unit offers an Honours BA in Digital Media and Journalism as well as an Advanced Standing Honours BA in Digital Media and Journalism for graduates of Conestoga College's Journalism Diploma. The program also offers an Issue Advocacy Option and Media Studies Option for undergraduate students in other programs and departments. The Self-Study was authored by Bruce Gillespie, the DMJ Program Coordinator, with input and feedback from participating program faculty. In addition to the Self-Study (Volume I), the program also submitted a copy of faculty curricula vita (Volume II), a volume of course syllabi, and a list of proposed external reviewers (Volume III). A draft of the Self-Study was reviewed by the Quality Assurance Office and Dean of the Faculty of Liberal Arts prior to submission of the final version.

As per Laurier's IQAP, the external review committee for the review consisted of one external reviewer from outside the university, and one internal reviewer from Laurier but outside of the department. The review committee was selected by the Program Review Sub-Committee on September 23, 2019, and the site visit was scheduled by the Quality Assurance Office for November 21-22, 2019.

The review committee consisted of Dr. Pamela Bryden from the Department of Kinesiology and Physical Education at Wilfrid Laurier and Dr. Colette Brin from the Département d'Information et de Communication at the Université Laval. During the two-day site visit, the review committee met with the following individuals and groups:

- Dr. Maureen Mancuso, Interim Provost & Vice-President: Academic and Dr. Kristiina Montero, Interim Associate Vice-President, Teaching and Learning
- Dr. Kathryn Carter, Interim Dean of the Faculty of Liberal Arts
- Professor Bruce Gillespie, Digital Media and Journalism Program Coordinator
- Faculty from the Digital Media and Journalism Program
- Digital Media and Journalism students
- Ms. Charlotte Innerd, Head of Collections and Acquisitions and Ms. Pauline Dewan, Liaison Librarian
- Ms. Melissa Huszczo, Senior Administrative Officer, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Ms. Chandler Berardi and Ms. Melissa Weaver, Digital Media and Journalism Program Assistants
- Ms. Sara Neziol, Manager: Educational Advising
- Mr. Matthew Wyman-McCarthy, Research Facilitator, Brantford Campus

In addition to the meetings listed above, the review committee also received a tour of innovative learning spaces used in the program, including the Mac Lab, The Switch, and an Active Learning Classroom. The review committee submitted their completed report on January 6, 2020. The executive summary from the report is provided below.

### **External Reviewers' Report Executive Summary**

The DMJ program is well aligned with Laurier's institutional values and priorities, with special focus on experiential learning and enhancing diversity. Its faculty is highly engaged and collaborative, with strong leadership from the Program Director.

The replacement of the suite of courses offered by Conestoga College by a Digital Media Production certificate is the core recommendation of this report. The savings incurred (\$300K annually) should be reinvested in hiring a lab coordinator and purchasing additional equipment. Students will benefit from a more highly integrated learning experience and this new certificate will also attract new students. The creation of this new certificate will be supported by a thorough analysis of the program structure, including course mapping, to ensure consistency and that learning objectives are reached upon graduation.

We recommend that Laurier actively support the creation of an endowed Chair in Indigenous Journalism, to foster innovation and reconciliation efforts, and to bolster DMJ's unique position in the ecosystem of Canadian journalism schools. The neighbouring Six Nations would be a natural partner to support this proposal.

We support the project of a co-op program, after the creation of the certificate in Digital Media Production, which will take a few years to build.

Finally, the program and student experience would benefit greatly from the presence of a physical library.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSES

The External Reviewers' Report included 11 recommendations, which have been listed verbatim below, followed by a summary of the program's response, and the decanal response.

**Recommendation #1:** Hold workshops for faculty and students to help them better use the Laurier Experience Record (portfolio) to showcase student work for potential employers.

**Unit Response:** We will contact our colleagues at the Career Centre, who oversee the Laurier Experience Record, to learn more about how our faculty and students could take advantage of this e-portfolio to showcase student work for potential employers and how best to achieve that (e.g., through a workshop, visit to a PCC meetings, in-class visits, self-guided documents or webinars, etc.).

**Decanal Response:** I agree that this will be a useful way to enhance students' abilities to articulate the value of their educational experiences.

**Recommendation #2:** Maintain admission requirements, in particular Grade 12/4U English grade of at least 75%. Survey current students to determine whether a specific class could be more predictive of writing skills.

**Unit Response:** We will maintain our admission requirements, in particular, the Grade 12/4U English grade of at least 75%. We will also reach out to our colleagues in Institutional Research and/or Recruitment to see if they are able to provide an analysis of *which* 4U English course (e.g., English Literature, Writer's Craft, etc.) is the best predictor of DMJ students' success.

**Decanal Response:** I am happy to agree that we maintain this particular admissions requirement.

**Recommendation #3:** Terminate agreement with Conestoga College; remove suite of courses currently offered by Conestoga in the DMJ.

**Unit Response:** We have already begun the process to terminate our relationship with Conestoga College, as initiated by a vote at our PCC meeting of January 10, 2020, and have shared this decision with our dean.

**Decanal Response:** We have already begun the institutional process needed to undo the partnership.

**Recommendation #4:** Produce analysis through syllabi/course mapping to ensure existing course structure is adapted to learning objectives and to plan the replacement of the Conestoga courses.

**Unit Response:** We will undertake a syllabi and course mapping analysis after we have developed our new suite of media production courses to ensure that the new course structure and progression provides a balance of practical and theory-based courses on a year-by-year basis.

**Decanal Response:** This will be a useful undertaking as the program reshapes itself in the wake of the Conestoga partnership dissolution.

**Recommendation #5:** Create a certificate in Digital Media Production.

**Unit Response:** As we terminate our relationship with Conestoga College, we will create a replacement credential to ensure that our program continues to offer two credentials to students. We will create a suite of DMJ courses focused on media production that will combine to form a certificate or other type of non-degree credential that will not only serve DMJ students but can also be offered to Brantford campus students more broadly, as well as members of the community.

**Decanal Response:** This will also be a useful undertaking as the program reshapes itself in the wake of the Conestoga partnership dissolution.

**Recommendation #6:** Consider adding an advanced version of Reporting and Writing for News in 3<sup>rd</sup> year.

**Unit Response:** Our existing DMJN319: Integrated Media Lab course is already an advanced version of DMJN101: Reporting and Writing for News in all but name. The only difference is that it does not currently have a theoretical component. We will consider adding this component when we undertake our syllabi and curriculum mapping analysis.

**Decanal Response:** Further decisions about this recommendation will become clear as the program completes curriculum mapping.

**Recommendation #7:** Produce an analysis of high school and first-year grades over several cohorts to determine if there are any roadblocks to students' success in the program.

**Unit Response:** We already produce a similar type of analysis on a regular basis, with the support and assistance of the Associate Dean and Academic Advising, reviewing which of our students fail, withdraw or earn grades less than a C in DMJN101, so that the Program Coordinator can follow up with them to offer supports, advice, etc. We will contact our colleagues in Academic Advising and/or Institutional Research to see if it is possible to produce analysis that links these grades with students' high school grades.

**Decanal Response:** Retention will be of ever-growing importance in the coming years, and I support the program's efforts to keep up to date on relevant information.

**Recommendation #8:** Purchase new equipment for the Mac Lab, video studio, video and audio equipment for field assignments, etc.

**Unit Response:** It will be necessary to replace, or buy out, the existing equipment in the Mac Lab to coincide with Conestoga's final year of course offerings, as it is owned by Conestoga. We will lobby our dean and the VPA's office to reinvest some of the funds that would otherwise have been paid to Conestoga to pay for this equipment that will be required to deliver our own media production certificate successfully.

**Decanal Response:** I am very hopeful that the cost savings from Conestoga will allow us to make some wise investments in the program.

**Recommendation #9:** Keep the creation of a physical library on the Brantford campus as a top priority.

**Unit Response:** We will continue to lobby for the creation of a physical library on the Brantford campus as top priority.

**Decanal Response:** This recommendation is outside of the program's purview (and my own), but we all agree that reasonable access to resources (books, technology, and other) is crucial for our students.

**Recommendation #10:** Create a Lab Coordinator position for a technology specialist. This could be a dual position, which could include lecturing duties.

**Unit Response:** We support this idea as one significant way to reinvest the funds currently supporting our Conestoga integration and will make this case to our dean and VPA as required.

**Decanal Response:** This can be reviewed as the financial savings become clarified, but I am supportive of this position.

**Recommendation #11:** Work with the Development Office to secure an endowed teaching chair in Indigenous Journalism, with a scholarship component for Indigenous students.

**Unit Response:** We will start working with the Development Office to secure external funding and/or donations to support an endowed teaching chair in Indigenous journalism, with a scholarship component for Indigenous DMJ students.

**Decanal Response:** I am very supportive of this recommendation, and I think it could be a defining feature of Digital Media and Journalism at Brantford.

## STRENGTHS OF THE PROGRAM(S)

**Dean of Liberal Arts:** I agree with the reviewers that experiential learning and a nimble approach to the ever-changing world of journalism are the strongest elements of a strong program. I appreciate the reviewers' acuity in identifying additional ways in which the program can continue to evolve in beneficial ways in the coming years.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT

**Dean of Liberal Arts:** One of the key recommendations in this report is to untangle the DMJN program from its partnership with Conestoga College. I believe that this one change, already being implemented, will lead to a number of solid improvements for the program in many ways, allowing them to have more oversight about pedagogical outcomes, allowing the students to have a more focused experience, and paving the way for Laurier to support the program with more of the equipment and support it needs.

## SIGNATURES

Dr. Mary Wilson

September 23, 2020



Dr. Anthony Vannelli

September 28, 2020



Approved by Program Review Sub-Committee:

October 6, 2020

Approved by Senate Academic Planning  
Committee:

March 23, 2021

Submitted to Senate (for information):

April 12, 2021

Implementation Report Due Date:

April 12, 2023

## RECOMMENDATIONS PRIORITIZED FOR IMPLEMENTATION AND ACTION PLAN

*The following Implementation Plan was created by the Dean of Liberal Arts as part of the Decanal Response.*

Recommendation to be Implemented	Responsibility for Implementation	Responsibility for Resourcing (if applicable)	Anticipated Completion Date
Recommendation #1: Hold workshops for faculty and students to help them better use the Laurier Experience Record (portfolio) to showcase student work for potential employers.	DMJN Program, in collaboration with the Career Development Centre		Ongoing; first to be held in Winter 2021 if possible
Recommendation #2: Maintain admission requirements, in particular Grade 12/4U English grade of at least 75%. Survey current students to determine whether a specific class could be more predictive of writing skills.	DMJN Program, in consultation with Institutional Research		Ongoing
Recommendation #3: Terminate agreement with Conestoga College; remove suite of courses currently offered by Conestoga in the DMJ.	DMJN Program, Dean of Liberal Arts	Faculty of Liberal Arts	January 2020
Recommendation #4: Produce analysis through syllabi/course mapping to ensure existing course structure is adapted to learning objectives and to plan the replacement of the Conestoga courses.	DMJN Program		December 2020
Recommendation #5: Create a certificate in Digital Media Production.	DMJN Program	Faculty of Liberal Arts	Begin in September 2020

Recommendation #6: Consider adding an advanced version of Reporting and Writing for News in 3rd year.	DMJN Program	Faculty of Liberal Arts	Decision by January 2021
Recommendation #7: Produce an analysis of high school and first-year grades over several cohorts to determine if there are any roadblocks to students' success in the program.	DMJN Program, in consultation with Academic Advising / Institutional Research		January 2021
Recommendation #8: Purchase new equipment for the Mac Lab, video studio, video and audio equipment for field assignments, etc.	DMJN Program, in consultation with Dean of Liberal Arts	Faculty of Liberal Arts	Summer 2021
Recommendation #10: Create a Lab Coordinator position for a technology specialist. This could be a dual position, which could include lecturing duties.	DMJN Program, in consultation with Dean of Liberal Arts, Provost and Vice-President: Academic	Faculty of Liberal Arts	September 2021
Recommendation #11: Work with the Development Office to secure an endowed teaching chair in Indigenous Journalism, with a scholarship component for Indigenous students.	DMJN Program, in consultation with Office of Indigenous Initiatives and Development Office		Begin in Winter 2021