

Final Assessment Report for the 2024-2025 Cyclical Review of the User Experience Design Program

INTRODUCTION

In accordance with Laurier's Institutional Quality Assurance Procedures ([Policy 2.1](#)), this Final Assessment Report provides a summary of the cyclical program review process for the User Experience Design program, prepared by the Quality Assurance Office, along with an identification of strengths of the program(s) under review authored by the Interim Dean of the Faculty of Liberal Arts. All recommendations made by the external review committee in their report are listed, followed by a summary of the program's response, and the decanal response. Recommendations prioritized are listed in the Implementation Plan, with those not being prioritized for implementation noted as well.

The Final Assessment Report is reviewed and approved by 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 university's [Cyclical Program Review Public Accountability webpage](#).

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 Implementation Report is submitted to the Senate Academic Planning Committee for information.

SUMMARY OF REVIEW PROCESS

This was the first cyclical program review for the BDes in User Experience Design program, which began in 2017. The Self-Study was authored primarily by Abby Goodrum and Kathryn Carter, who both served as program co-ordinators during the cyclical program review timeframe, with input from all program members. The contributions of Ms. Nicole Morgan, Academic Program Administrator, and key staff associated with the program, were gratefully acknowledged. 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 the Interim Dean of the Faculty of Liberal Arts prior to submission of the final version.

Following Laurier's IQAP, the external review committee for the review consisted of two external reviewers from outside the university, and one internal reviewer from Laurier but outside of the unit. The review committee was selected by the Program Review Sub-Committee on September 19, 2024, and an in-person site visit took place on February 3-4, 2025.

The review committee consisted of **Dr. Andrew Welsh** from the Department of Criminology at Wilfrid Laurier, **Dr. Mia Consalvo** from the Department of Communication Studies at Concordia University and **Dr. Deborah Fels** from the Department of Information Technology Management at Toronto Metropolitan University. During the external review, the committee met with the following individuals and groups:

- Dr. Heidi Northwood, Provost and Vice-President: Academic
- Dr. Kathryn Carter, User Experience Design Program Coordinator
- Dr. Bruce McKay, Interim Dean of the Faculty of Liberal Arts
- User Experience Design undergraduate students
- Ms. Jamie Wheeler, Manager of Academic Advising
- User Experience Design Full-Time Faculty
- User Experience Design Contract Teaching Faculty
- Ms. Nicole Morgan, Academic Program Administrator
- Mr. Andrew Hawling, Strategic Relationship Officer
- Mr. Matt Thomas, Department Head, Information Resources and Mr. Mark Weiler, Liaison Librarian
- Ms. Sally Heath, Associate Director: Academic Program Development and Quality Assurance

In addition to the meetings listed above, the committee took a tour hosted by Dr. John Muñoz of relevant UX lab spaces. The review committee submitted their completed report on March 11, 2025. The executive summary from the report, and its recommendations, are provided below.

EXTERNAL REVIEWERS' REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The UX program is a strong and cohesive program with a dedicated group of faculty as well as students. It was clear from the documentation provided and especially the site visit that faculty and administrators are dedicated to the success of the program and are invested in continuing to build the program and make it even more successful. Likewise, students spoke passionately about their commitment to the program, and wanting to see it succeed even after they graduate. This evaluation comes at an opportune time, when careful refinement and revision can make a strong program even better. However, the forward momentum established with the program's launch will need strong reinforcement via new leadership in order for the program to grow and flourish. What follows are our list of key recommendations condensed from the sections above, which we believe will help the program achieve those goals.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSES

The External Reviewers' Report included 28 recommendations to improve the quality of the User Experience Design program and students' experience in it. All recommendations have been listed verbatim below, followed by a summary of the program's response, and a response by the Interim Dean of the Faculty of Liberal Arts.

Recruitment and Admissions

Recommendation #1: Develop a recruitment strategy that actively identifies specific gaps in diversity objectives and proposes action items to address those gaps. Investigate reasons for the decreased yield of incoming students and create an actionable recruitment plan on how to reverse that trend that includes target enrolment goals, timeline and recruitment strategies. Consider targeting beyond the GTA in that strategy.

Unit Response: The program is committed to recruiting as many students, and as many students from diverse backgrounds, as possible. Like all Laurier programs, we rely heavily on the university's Admissions and Recruitment Department, as well as the Faculty of Liberal Arts Recruitment Specialist, for the bulk of this work for and for the development and deployment of recruitment strategies. Our program members regularly attend the Ontario Universities' Fair, Laurier Open Houses, and host groups of high school students in an effort to support recruitment. We also send personalized letters to program applicants to promote the unique experiences offered by our program. We will continue to work closely with the university's recruitment specialists to increase our number of incoming students directly from high school and are eager to participate in university-led strategies to reach broader diversity objectives.

Decanal Response: The university is in the process of a) collecting data to help them understand the diversity of current students and b) formulating a plan to ensure Laurier's recruitment strategically reaches groups who have historically not had access to the university education. An example of this initiative is the AVP: Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity and AVP: Enrollment Services and Registrar's joint working group on access to education. Their strategy is focused on a university-wide approach, rather than at the program level; however, if UX wanted to develop a program specific diversity recruitment plan, the associate registrar would be interested in working with UX as a test case for program specific diversity goals.

More broadly, recruitment for UX is a priority within the Faculty of Liberal Arts. The Dean's office will continue to work with program and the team from Admissions and Recruitment and Marketing and Branding in raising the profile of UX in key markets.

Recommendation #2: Research how best to improve the transfer pipeline for WLIC students, including better marketing of the program. Add these goals and strategies to the recruitment plan from recommendation 1.

Unit Response: Since the review took place, the WLIC was relocated to the Waterloo campus. We voiced our concerns about how this relocation might affect the number of WLIC graduates who would want to continue their education in the UX program at the Brantford campus. We will support the Dean and WLIC in their efforts to ensure the UX program remains an attractive post-WLIC study option for WLIC students.

Decanal Response: It is important to be understand the recruitment, student experience, and retention for UX WLIC students. I will make it a priority to get data about the recruitment initiatives and student success within WLIC for the university as a whole and UX. What I discovered to date is that between Fall 2021-Winter 2025, 57 UXD students transferred from WLIC, on average 13 per year. This is lower than other Waterloo and Brantford programs and it would be good to investigate further.

Recommendation #3: Enrollment remains low for the program, compared with other programs at WLU. Competitive programs at other universities and colleges, geographical location and limited resources make it difficult to market the program. Increase efforts to market and differentiate the program with a goal of increasing full- or part-time enrollment to the university-set maximum intake of 40 students. Increase outreach to high schools in Canada, the US and internationally, and industry in Ontario and Canada for increased co-op opportunities and external funding.

Unit Response: Although the program's enrollment post-pandemic is not as high as we would like, particularly in terms of direct entries from high school, it remains strong compared to other programs in the Faculty of Liberal Arts. We will continue to collaborate with the university's recruitment and admissions specialists to increase our number of incoming students directly from high school and with our Academic Advisors to promote our program as an attractive option for students transferring internally from other Laurier programs.

Decanal Response: My response is similar to #1 regarding recruitment plans. I would add that as of Fall 2025, enrollment targets for UX make it the 3rd largest program in FLA. The two programs with higher enrollment targets benefit from additional enrollment from their Sussex and Teaching option pathways. Comparably, UX is bringing in the most FLA students with only its major.

Recommendation #4: Continue to offer UX courses to all other programs at the three WLU campuses. However, re-consider the pedagogical justification for the need to declare a "minor" before being able to take these courses by students in other programs.

Unit Response: The UX program continues to be interested in offering some of our courses at all of Laurier's campuses and have seen a great deal of interest in them at Waterloo and Milton, where taking a UX major is not an option. Laurier is currently going through a university-wide project of eliminating options in favour of minors, so we will take this opportunity to consider the role of service teaching in our program and how best to offer and efficiently administer registration in the minor as part of our upcoming curriculum review and revision project, scheduled for Spring 2026, and in consultation with Academic Advising and the Dean.

Decanal Response: I concur with the unit's response.

Recommendation #5: Report standard deviation for all statistics containing means, e.g., course evaluations.

Unit Response: This data is always reported in individual student course evaluations that Laurier uses each semester and is also available to the Program Coordinator in aggregate. This data was also provided in the relevant tables in the Self-Study report.

Decanal Response: I concur with the unit's response.

Coursework and Curriculum

Recommendation #6: A curriculum review and revision should be carried out to:

- a. Consider/plan re-organization of course structure and distribution to balance courses among the 8 semesters of coursework;
- b. Reduce required course quantity and increase in-program elective options that result; and
- c. Ensure that advanced courses are not teaching similar topics and levels as related introductory courses.

Unit Response: The program agrees that this is an ideal moment at which to embark on a curriculum review and revision project and looks forward to beginning this work in Spring 2026. We intend to address the overall curriculum structure, the number of required courses and electives, and the consistency and laddering of concepts and tools across the curriculum.

Decanal Response: I full support this plan. It is addressed in more detail in #2 in the opportunities and enhancement section of this report.

Recommendation #7: As part of the curriculum review and revision, create an actionable plan that balances group work and individual work. For group work, create and normalize different strategies to help students manage responsibilities and division of labour including plans for when students do not or cannot meet their obligations.

Unit Response: We intend to discuss strategies about balancing individual assessments with group assessments as part of our forthcoming curriculum review and revision project while remaining mindful that instructors have the academic freedom to teach as they see fit as long as they adhere to the program's learning objectives and course calendar descriptions.

Decanal Response: I would be supportive of whatever the program decides is best to evaluate students and prepare them to work in the field. Teaching Excellence and Innovation can also be of support in recommending best practices for group work, especially amongst commuting students.

Recommendation #8: Formalize how professionalization across the program via integration of portfolio development (among other elements) within multiple courses.

Unit Response: We intend to discuss how to formalize professionalization activities across the program, inside and outside of the classroom, as part of our forthcoming curriculum review and revision project. This will include a discussion of when and how to embed portfolio development across our curriculum most effectively.

Decanal Response: I am supportive of the unit's response.

Recommendation #9: Create a course coordination strategy to ensure consistency for all courses and course outlines regardless of delivery method.

Unit Response: As interest in the UX program has grown, and interest by non-majors taking our electives across multiple campuses in a variety of modes has increased, we have come to appreciate the importance of coordinating of courses with multiple sections to ensure consistency for students. We will discuss this as part of our upcoming curriculum review and revision project in Spring 2026.

Decanal Response: I am supportive of the unit's response. If they wish, the Dean's office can provide examples of how course coordination is handled in the Leadership Program as well as in Science and Business.

Recommendation #10: A full-time or LTA faculty member should be responsible for coordinating all sections of one course to ensure that consistency and equivalency can be maintained. This should be applied to all courses offered by the program.

Unit Response: We will work with the Dean during the course build process to ensure that course coordination is rolled out and compensated according to the language in both the Full-time and Professional Librarians Collective Agreement and the Contract Faculty and Part-time Librarians Collective Agreement depending on whether it is a Full-time or Contract Faculty Member undertaking this work.

Decanal Response: Please see my response to #9.

Recommendation #11: Create student focused materials to manage expectations regarding tool currency.

Unit Response: Generally speaking, we believe that a good UX program should be tool agnostic: that students should be able to undertake UX research, prototyping, and testing with a variety of tools, especially given how quickly software changes in this. That said, we recognize the value in clarifying for students the main tools, platforms, and software that they will be expected to use across the curriculum and plan to discuss ways to share this information effectively—e.g., via a UX student handbook, a document that could be shared on MyLearningSpace and/or incorporated into syllabi—as part of our upcoming curriculum review and revision project in Spring 2026.

Decanal Response: This is a sensible plan. It could also be part of the new and current student facing websites.

Recommendation #12: Consider reducing the quantity of tests, or being more specific about the type of tests used particularly for the advanced courses.

Unit Response: Like most university programs, we are trying to determine the most effective ways to assess student learning in the age of generative AI. We also recognize that class size and mode of delivery have an impact on the types of assessments that are effective and efficient. As an interdisciplinary program, we see the value in a wide range of learning assessments, from academic essays, quizzes, tests and exams to prototypes, portfolios, and client projects. We also recognize that instructors have the academic freedom to design assessments that align with their pedagogy. We intend to discuss these issues as part of our upcoming curriculum review and revision project in Spring 2026.

Decanal Response: I support the unit's response. Similar to #7, Teaching Excellence and Innovation are good resources if faculty want instructional design support for assessments.

Recommendation #13: Review hardware and software purchases required for courses. Ensure that students can benefit from these purchases throughout the program rather than for a single course.

Unit Response: We do not require our students to buy any hardware or software as part of their coursework. Instead, we make relevant software available in the computer lab in the MDC building and ensure that students are able to access that space 24 hours a day, seven days a week, when it is not being used for a class.

Decanal Response: I support this response.

Recommendation #14: Reduce the required courses and the single offering restrictions. Allow students in the main cohort to register for virtual offerings since they are considered equivalent. Otherwise, justify the restrictions based on pedagogical reasoning. This will allow major and minor students who are out of sync for whatever reason to have some flexibility and not have to wait a semester or two until the next in-person offering is available.

Unit Response: Our program has grown considerably in the past seven years, especially in terms of how many courses we offer to non-majors online. We also recognize the importance of our majors attending classes in person, taking advantage of the resources offered on campus (e.g., the computer lab, the maker lab) and having the chance to build a strong network among their cohort. We can imagine situations in which majors could be allowed to take the online version of a course (e.g., to stay in sync with their cohort) and intend to consult with Academic Advising and discuss this as part of our upcoming curriculum review and revision project.

Decanal Response: I am supportive of the unit's approach.

Recommendation #15: Review how portfolio development is being implemented throughout the program. Review how course relevant portfolio development can be included in all required courses and develop a process for doing so.

Unit Response: As noted in our response to Recommendation 8 above, we intend to discuss how to formalize professionalization activities across the program, inside and outside of the classroom, as part of our forthcoming curriculum review and revision project. This will include a discussion of when and how to embed portfolio development across our curriculum.

Decanal Response: I support the unit's response.

Recommendation #16: Offer the co-op option to all students in the third year of the program, unrestricted. There is justifiable pedagogical and inclusiveness reasoning for this approach. It would be a benefit to all instead of a few.

Unit Response: While we appreciate the principle behind opening co-op to all students, our experience is that not all students are ready for, or want to undertake, a paid co-op. Laurier's Co-op Office is of the same opinion; thus, we would be concerned that allowing unlimited entry to co-op could send unprepared students into the workplace, which would not benefit them and could, in fact, affect the reputation of the program and Laurier overall. Every UX student has the chance to apply to and be considered for a competitive co-op placement as it stands. We will continue to engage in discussions with the Co-op Office about the possibility of increasing capacity for placements in the future.

Decanal Response: Laurier's UX co-op is accredited by CEWIL (Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning Canada) signifying high standards of quality, accessibility, and impact of work-integrated learning. In UX, like most Laurier co-op options, co-op enrolment is handled via a competitive admission process. I agree with the program that co-op should not be mandatory.

Recommendation #17: If student readiness or ability is a factor for selection for co-op, consider alternative strategies or placements that offer stronger scaffolding for student abilities. Admission to co-op is based on grades, work experience, volunteer and extracurricular activities, and an interview with the Co-op Office.

Unit Response: As part of our upcoming curriculum review and revision project, we will consider ways to prepare and scaffold our students to be successful when applying for a co-op placement. We will continue working with the Co-op Office in its review of student performance while on placements and make adjustments to our joint preparation strategies as necessary.

Decanal Response: As the self study showed, the program has been responsive to improving the co-op experience in the past (i.e. the addition of UX122) and had a solid place for continued monitoring the employee and student feedback.

Recommendation #18: Negotiate for more resources and assistance from the WLU co-op office and involve the program advisory committee (to be established) to increase the co-op placement positions.

Unit Response: We strongly support more resources and assistance from the Co-op Office in Brantford and will support the Dean in negotiating for them.

Decanal Response: It is my understanding that the cap on the number of undergraduate UX majors who can be admitted to co-op is 15 students, a decision made in 2018 between the program coordinator and the co-op office that was approved by senate. Typically, co-op periods at Laurier last 4-6 months. The UXD requirement of 12-16-month work terms limits employer availability and that is the reason for the cap. According to the review, during the period under review, the number admitted to co-op during the competitive process fluctuated from 7-13 students (approx. 1/3 to 1/2 of majors in year 3) all of whom had 100% employment. If the program is anticipating more demand for the co-op stream beyond the 15 cap, it is a good time to revisit the goals, quantity, and length of the co-op opportunities in consultation with the co-op office and the dean's office. This can be done alongside investigating and implementing resources to enhance student preparedness discussed in #17.

Program Management

Recommendation #19: Maintain the SRO position but transfer it to a university-funded position or find secure funding to support this position over the long term.

Unit Response: The program fully agrees with and emphasizes the importance of the SRO position, which is a university-funded position, to the Program's long-term success. We would further add that the SRO position is critical to the long-term viability of the Program and that without it we would not be able to offer the range of in-class and external professional development activities currently offered to UX students.

Decanal Response: I can confirm that the SRO position is a university-funded and permanent.

Recommendation #20: Establish a formal funding raising strategy to replace the private sector sponsorship within a short but reasonable timeframe. The university, Faculty and program should be involved in the formulation and implementation of it.

Unit Response: We have seen first-hand the benefits of fundraising in our program in terms of offering professional development opportunities to students, hosting speaker events and design competitions, and offering entrance scholarships. We will continue to lobby the Dean and the Vice-President: Academic and Provost to prioritize the needs of the UX program for the Development Office and will be happy to support the Development Office in their activities on our behalf.

Decanal Response: In my time as interim Dean, advocating for UX (i.e. scholarships, chairs, funded research, technology etc.) has been a priority in my discussions with the VP and staff in Development who are in the process of developing a new Brantford campus plan.

Recommendation #21: The ratio of contract to full time faculty should be reduced. Additional LTAs may be a useful interim solution to reducing this ratio until additional full-time faculty can be allotted.

Unit Response: We fully support more full-time hires for our program and look forward to hiring one new full-time faculty member for July 1, 2026. An increase in full-time faculty numbers will help to enhance research output, build on the interdisciplinary expertise of our program, and develop long-term course, leadership, and succession planning.

Decanal Response: As stated by the unit, one new position is confirmed for July 1, 2026. The dean's office cannot commit to further hires at this time. The decision for new LTA or tenure track positions is made at the Academic Vice-President and Provost level.

Recommendation #22: Devise and implement strategies to increase research output, attract graduate students from thesis programs through collaborations and cross-appointments with thesis programs at WLU and other universities where appropriate, and grant funding applications.

Unit Response: Across the board, our program has increased research output and grant applications in the past few years and will continue to do so. As a fairly young program, we are still building research capacity and expect to see increased outputs of in the next few years. We do not have a thesis-based graduate program, so our faculty are already reaching out to and working with graduate students in other programs at Laurier and across the country. We also recognize that the service burden of a small, under-resourced program means that faculty do not always have as much time to devote to grant applications and publishing as they might like.

Decanal Response: I appreciate the unit's response. If they would like external support, I can make that known to the Office of Research Services.

Recommendation #23: Develop a partnership strategy that will span undergraduate education, funding and research. This strategy should involve the establishment of a program advisory committee consisting of industry and community representatives and that has set terms, bylaws and a succession plan.

Unit Response: We highly value the input we receive from our industry contacts and our own alumni and work hard to nurture and grow these connections so as to be able to incorporate their experience from the field into our curriculum. We do some of this work informally, via each faculty member's connections to the industry, as well as through attending conferences, engaging industry partners as clients for class projects, working with our Alumni officer, and through our SRO's connections and outreach. As such, establishing and overseeing a program advisory committee does not seem like an effective or efficient use of faculty and staff time at this point. It would also involve considerable work that is not outlined in either of our Collective Agreements.

Decanal Response: I agree that for a program of this size, a program advisory board is not an effective or efficient use of faculty and staff time. The SRO position in consultation with the program seems sufficient for addressing and revisiting partnership strategy.

Recommendation #24: Set fund-raising goals and generate a funding raising strategy to replace the funding provided by Scotiabank.

Unit Response: As noted in our response to Recommendation 20 above, we have seen first-hand the benefits of fundraising in our program in terms of offering professional development opportunities to students, hosting speaker events and design competitions, and offering entrance scholarships. We will continue to lobby the Dean and the Vice-President: Academic and Provost to prioritize needs of the UX program for the Development Office and will be happy to support the Development Office in their activities on our behalf. We welcome appropriate goals and strategies as defined and operationalized by the Dean and the Development Office.

Decanal Response: I concur with the unit that this not a program related responsibility. See my response for #20.

Recommendation #25: Increase student participation in undergraduate program development. Establish an undergraduate student advisory committee and an alumni committee. In addition, Alumni could participate in the program advisory committee recommended in the Quality Enhancement section.

Unit Response: Our UXD Student Association is active and very well developed. They share feedback about the program on a regular basis, helping us fine tune course offerings and decide the types of extracurricular activities to offer and support. We also gather student feedback every semester via course surveys. Our alumni are extremely active and supportive of our program through class visits, professional networking opportunities, and making industry connections for co-op placements. We have a strong relationship with our Alumni officer, so do not see the value in investing faculty time in creating and coordinating an advisory committee at this point.

Decanal Response: While a good idea in principle, it is not a common practice in the Faculty of Liberal Arts to have undergraduate student advisory committees. In addition to the undergraduate association noted by the unit, there are undergraduate student representatives within the Faculty and University governance bodies.

Recommendation #26: Increase outreach to departments and faculties at WLU and other institutions to increase research partnerships and opportunities for thesis-based graduate students.

Unit Response: Although our MSc does not have a thesis-based option, some of our faculty members participate in and supervise students in other graduate programs at Laurier as well as engage in outreach to cognate departments at Laurier and beyond to find undergraduate and graduate students to participate in their research.

Decanal Response: This would be a key step if the program decided to add a thesis-based program at the graduate level.

Recommendation #27: Continue to grow the hands-on facilities by adding additional lab supervisors and monitoring staff so that these facilities can be available during the day and evening periods as well as on

weekends to support student work. On-going safety training should also be regularly scheduled through all semesters.

Unit Response: We already provide ongoing safety training for our hands-on facilities and ensure that training sheets are available to students and faculty members in those spaces. We will continue to lobby the Dean for funding to hire more staff to support the lab/facilities spaces, as we are currently limited to hiring students through the Laurier Work Study program to monitor the labs.

Decanal Response: The feedback within the self study about lack of access to lab space was limited to one sentence stating that during the pandemic the labs were unavailable due to the university's closure. My understanding is the UX Makerspace lab is currently supervised by the Makerspace I and II instructor during class time and a work study student for an additional 5 hours per week. The wet lab is the responsibility of Game Design and Development. It would be useful to have current data regarding lab usage outside of class time. If the current schedule of 5 hours per week is not sufficient to meet student needs for coursework, the dean welcomes a recommendation for shifting the time of supervision or adding hours of supervision.

Recommendation #28: Recruit a senior professor/administrator to take on a leadership role for the program. This person should have an established research record in order to support the new faculty that have been recently onboarded, the new graduate program and to evolve and streamline the program from its current state. In addition, this individual should have an industry collaboration record in order to support the co-op program, industry engagement in the program and fundraising.

Unit Response: Our program has been approved for a full-time hire to begin July 1, 2026. Our search committee is currently determining the appropriate nature and rank of this hire based on the needs of the program. That may or may not be someone to lead the program; the program has complete confidence in any of its current members to lead and grow the program. We note that the recommendation to hire someone who has "an industry collaboration record in order to support the co-op program, industry engagement in the program and fundraising" goes beyond the duties of a full-time faculty member or Program Coordinator outlined in our Collective Agreement.

Decanal Response: As identified on page 2, succession planning is critical for the program, as moving to a period when the program coordinator can come from within the program.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS

Dean of the Faculty of Liberal Arts:

- 1. Dedicated faculty and staff**

The program created a unique major and delivers it in a thriving learning environment that values currency, innovation, diversity, equity, and reflection. The faculty and staff are strong advocates for their students and knowledgeable about how to further strengthen their program.

2. Experiential Learning

The program's Academic-Industry/Government/Not for Profit partnerships via co-op and coursework, plus student participation in faculty research projects, have produced dynamic experiential learning opportunities which allow students to develop and test their UX skills, develop professional experience and networks, and craft designs that contribute to improved products, businesses, user experiences, and communities.

3. Human-Centre Design Curriculum

The program combines the critical thinking, theory, writing, and oral communication skills of a traditional Liberal Arts BA with the technical, entrepreneurial, and systems side of design that centres human experiences, knowledge, and relationships in every step of the design process.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT

Dean of the Faculty of Liberal Arts:

1. Succession Planning & Leadership

For well-documented reasons related to program size, career stage, and members fulfilling leadership positions elsewhere in the university, the UX program did not have any internal nominations for the role of program coordinator for 2023-2024 and 2024-2025. As undoubtedly the program knows, having a coordinator with UX experience would be incredibly helpful in navigating the recommendations from this review, as well as be responsive to challenges and opportunities that arise within the UX field and the shifting landscape of post-secondary schooling in Ontario. I invite faculty appointed to the program to think about short- and long-term succession planning. Things to consider: At what point will there be faculty within the program available to put their names forward as program coordinator? What is the preferred interim solution, i.e. approaching candidates within Laurier but outside UX, advocating for new hires at the associate/full professor level? I encourage early planning for 2026-2027 so there can be transition period and/or support from Dean's office, if needed, to find an appropriate candidate.

2. Academic Planning: Priorities

In only eight years, the program rapidly and successfully expanded to offer UX education to different cohorts of students (i.e. undergrad, grad, co-op, non-co-op, majors, minors, students taking UX courses as electives, domestic students, and WLIC and non-WLIC international students). Courses were offered in three modes of delivery to students from three campuses. The expansion was due to strong interest in UX and financial pressures from within the Faculty of Liberal Arts. The results were increased enrollment within the Faculty of Liberal Arts. Nevertheless, the growth has stretched the program's resources and focus, i.e. 70+ sections are planned for the 2026-2027 course build that has only five fulltime faculty members and one new hire secured. During the growth, though not a cause and effect, there has been a decline in accepted offers for UX majors in the last three years, along with some progression and retention challenges identified, plus the ending of a major donor's sponsorship. It makes sense that for the next few years that the program's time and resources be directed toward retention and recruitment of UX majors and re-evaluating opportunities to improve or enhance the undergraduate curriculum and

student supports. While not the focus of this review, a concurrent priority would be sustainment of the new graduate program.

SIGNATURES

Dr. Trish McLaren

January 8, 2026



APPROVAL DATES

Approved by Program Review Sub-Committee: March 26, 2026

Approved by Senate Academic Planning Committee: April 28, 2026

Submitted to Senate (for information): May 21, 2026

Implementation Report Due Date: May 21, 2028

RECOMMENDATIONS PRIORITIZED FOR IMPLEMENTATION AND ACTION PLAN

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

Recommendation to be Implemented	Responsibility for Implementation	Responsibility for Resourcing (if applicable)	Anticipated Completion Date	Additional Notes
<p>Recommendation #1: Develop a recruitment strategy that actively identifies specific gaps in diversity objectives and proposes action items to address those gaps. Investigate reasons for the decreased yield of incoming students and create an actionable recruitment plan on how to reverse that trend that includes target enrolment goals, timeline and recruitment strategies. Consider targeting beyond the GTA in that strategy.</p>	<p>AVP: Equity, Inclusion, & Diversity</p> <p>AVP Enrollment Services & Registrar</p> <p>Admissions & Recruitment</p> <p>Marketing & Branding</p> <p>Dean's office</p> <p>Program</p>		<p>Ongoing within the recruitment cycle for 2025-2026 and 2026-2027.</p>	
<p>Recommendation #2: Research how best to improve the transfer pipeline for WLIC students, including better marketing of the program. Add these goals and strategies to the recruitment plan from recommendation 1.</p>	<p>Dean's office</p>		<p>August 2026</p>	
<p>Recommendation #3: Enrollment remains low for the program, compared with other programs at WLU. Competitive programs at other universities and colleges, geographical location and limited resources make it difficult to market</p>	<p>Admissions and Recruitment Team with support from the president's Marketing and</p>		<p>Ongoing efforts to increased interest more broadly in Brantford campus efforts between</p>	

the program. Increase efforts to market and differentiate the program with a goal of increasing full- or part-time enrollment to the university-set maximum intake of 40 students. Increase outreach to high schools in Canada, the US and internationally, and industry in Ontario and Canada for increased co-op opportunities and external funding.	Branding department, the FLA recruitment and marketing specialist, and the FLA Dean in consultation with the program.		2026-2028. Develop a plan to increase visibility of UX in untapped markets by Dec 2026.	
Recommendation #4: Continue to offer UX courses to all other programs at the three WLU campuses. However, re-consider the pedagogical justification for the need to declare a “minor” before being able to take these courses by students in other programs.	Program & Dean’s office.		December 2026	
Recommendation #5: Report standard deviation for all statistics containing means, e.g., course evaluations.	N/A – this recommendation was made in error. This already exists.			
Recommendation #6: A curriculum review and revision should be carried out to: d. Consider/plan re-organization of course structure and distribution to balance courses among the 8 semesters of coursework; e. Reduce required course quantity and increase in-program elective options that	Program		Started in Spring 2026 – completed by Fall 2027	Several recommendations fall into this broader category of curriculum and pedagogical reflection and revision.

<p>result; and</p> <p>f. Ensure that advanced courses are not teaching similar topics and levels as related introductory courses.</p>				
<p>Recommendation #7: As part of the curriculum review and revision, create an actionable plan that balances group work and individual work. For group work, create and normalize different strategies to help students manage responsibilities and division of labour including plans for when students do not or cannot meet their obligations.</p>	Program		See #6	
<p>Recommendation #8: Formalize how professionalization across the program via integration of portfolio development (among other elements) within multiple courses.</p>	Program		See #6	
<p>Recommendation #9: Create a course coordination strategy to ensure consistency for all courses and course outlines regardless of delivery method.</p>	Program		See #6	
<p>Recommendation #10: A full-time or LTA faculty member should be responsible for coordinating all sections of one course to ensure that consistency and equivalency can be maintained. This should be applied to all courses offered by the program.</p>	Program		See #6	

<p>Recommendation #11: Create student focused materials to manage expectations regarding tool currency.</p>	<p>Program</p>		<p>August 2026</p>	
<p>Recommendation #12: Consider reducing the quantity of tests, or being more specific about the type of tests used particularly for the advanced courses.</p>	<p>Program</p>		<p>See #6</p>	
<p>Recommendation #13: Review hardware and software purchases required for courses. Ensure that students can benefit from these purchases throughout the program rather than for a single course.</p>	<p>N/A – This recommendation was made in error. Students do not need to purchase any software.</p>			
<p>Recommendation #14: Reduce the required courses and the single offering restrictions. Allow students in the main cohort to register for virtual offerings since they are considered equivalent. Otherwise, justify the restrictions based on pedagogical reasoning. This will allow major and minor students who are out of sync for whatever reason to have some flexibility and not have to wait a semester or two until the next in-person offering is available.</p>	<p>Program</p>		<p>See #6</p>	
<p>Recommendation #15: Review how portfolio development is being implemented throughout the program. Review how course relevant portfolio development can be included in all required courses and develop a process for doing</p>	<p>Program</p>		<p>See #6</p>	

SO.				
Recommendation #16: Offer the co-op option to all students in the third year of the program, unrestricted. There is justifiable pedagogical and inclusiveness reasoning for this approach. It would be a benefit to all instead of a few.	N/A - I concur with the program that this is not a current priority or part of the wider Co-op operations at WLU.			
Recommendation #17: If student readiness or ability is a factor for selection for co-op, consider alternative strategies or placements that offer stronger scaffolding for student abilities.	Program Co-op		See #6	
Recommendation #18: Negotiate for more resources and assistance from the WLU co-op office and involve the program advisory committee (to be established) to increase the co-op placement positions.	Program Co-op Dean's office		See #6	
Recommendation #19: Maintain the SRO position but transfer it to a university-funded position or find secure funding to support this position over the long term.	N/A=This recommendation was made in error. The SRO position is university funded.			
Recommendation #20: Establish a formal funding raising strategy to replace the private sector sponsorship within a short but reasonable timeframe. The university, Faculty and program should be involved in the formulation and	Development Office Dean's Office		December 2026	

implementation of it.	Program			
Recommendation #21: The ratio of contract to full time faculty should be reduced. Additional LTAs may be a useful interim solution to reducing this ratio until additional full-time faculty can be allotted.	VPA & Provost's Office		New hire for July 1, 2026.	
Recommendation #22: Devise and implement strategies to increase research output, attract graduate students from thesis programs through collaborations and cross-appointments with thesis programs at WLU and other universities where appropriate, and grant funding applications.	Faculty members Office of Research Service		Ongoing	
Recommendation #23: Develop a partnership strategy that will span undergraduate education, funding and research. This strategy should involve the establishment of a program advisory committee consisting of industry and community representatives and that has set terms, bylaws and a succession plan.	SRO		Ongoing	
Recommendation #24: Set fund-raising goals and generate a funding raising strategy to replace the funding provided by Scotiabank.	Development & Advancement Dean's office		2026-2027	
Recommendation #25: Increase student participation in undergraduate program development. Establish an undergraduate	N/A - As there are other means for student engagement			

<p>student advisory committee and an alumni committee. In addition, Alumni could participate in the program advisory committee recommended in the Quality Enhancement section.</p>	<p>and feedback, the unit and dean's office does not see these as a priority currently.</p>			
<p>Recommendation #26: Increase outreach to departments and faculties at WLU and other institutions to increase research partnerships and opportunities for thesis-based graduate students.</p>	<p>N/A – there is not currently a thesis stream within the MA program.</p>			
<p>Recommendation #27: Continue to grow the hands-on facilities by adding additional lab supervisors and monitoring staff so that these facilities can be available during the day and evening periods as well as on weekends to support student work. On-going safety training should also be regularly scheduled through all semesters.</p>	<p>Program Dean's office</p>	<p>Program Dean's Office</p>	<p>Same as #6</p>	
<p>Recommendation #28: Recruit a senior professor/administrator to take on a leadership role for the program. This person should have an established research record in order to support the new faculty that have been recently onboarded, the new graduate program and to evolve and streamline the program from its current state. In addition, this individual should have an industry collaboration record in order to support the co-op program, industry engagement in the program and fundraising.</p>	<p>Program Dean's office</p>		<p>Winter 2026 for 2026-2027 year.</p>	

