PERIODIC PROGRAM REVIEW (PPR)
Bachelor of Fine Arts
In New Media
The Creative School

In accordance with the Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP)**,** this final assessment report provides a synthesis of the external evaluation and the internal response and assessments of the undergraduate **New Media** program. The report identifies the significant strengths of the program, together with opportunities for program improvement and enhancement, and it sets out and prioritizes the recommendations that have been selected for implementation.

The Implementation Plan identifies who will be responsible for leading the implementation of the recommendations; who will be responsible for providing any resources entailed by those recommendations; and timelines for acting on and monitoring the implementation of the recommendations.

SUMMARY OF THE PERIODIC PROGRAM REVIEW OF THE NEW MEDIA PROGRAM

The New Media program submitted a self-study report to the Vice-Provost Academic on September 17, 2019. The self-study presented the program description and learning outcomes, an analytical assessment of the program, and program data including the data collected from student, alumni and employer surveys, along with the standard University Planning data tables. Appended were the course outlines for all core required and elective courses in the program and the CVs for all faculty members in the Department of New Media and other faculty who have recently taught core courses (required and/or elective).

Two arm's-length external reviewers, Simone Jones, Professor, Faculty of Art, OCAD University, and Michael Longford, Associate Professor, School of the Arts, Media, Performance & Design, York University, were appointed by the Dean of the Creative School from a set of proposed reviewers. They reviewed the self-study documentation and then conducted a virtual site visit via video conferencing (Zoom) on December 7, 8 and 10, 2021.

The visit included meetings with the Provost and Vice-President Academic, Vice-Provost Academic; Dean of the Creative School; the Associate Dean Undergraduate Education and Student Affairs, the program Chair, representatives from the New Media faculty, staff, and students, as well as the Chief Librarian, and the subject librarian. The Peer Review Team (PRT) also had a virtual tour of the Makerspace, the Fabrication Workshop, the Equipment Distribution Centre, the Digital Technology Lab (DTL), program specific classrooms and project spaces.

In their report, dated January 31, 2022, the PRT provided feedback that describes how the New Media program meets the IQAP evaluation criteria and is consistent with the University's mission and academic priorities. The PRT acknowledged the rich curriculum conversations that took place with the program faculty which were fully engaged throughout the process of the review. The main areas of strength identified by the PRT include:

- **Program Learning Outcomes.** The learning outcomes for New Media are supported and

consistent with the with the University's mission and priorities in the academic plan in a number of significant ways. The New Media program provides students with flexibility and multiple pathways in years one through four to achieve PLOs. The PLOs leading to a Bachelor of Fine Arts in New Media are clearly articulated, and appropriate to the interdisciplinary and hybrid outcomes of the program, and are aligned to institutional UDLEs.

- **Societal Need.** The hybrid skills development, knowledge production and cultural concerns at the center of the New Media program are critical to society as we continue to embrace digital technologies in every aspect of our lives. Experimenting with new modes of interaction for non-screen-based interfaces, treating computer programming as creative expression, and engaging with the poetics of data are at the leading edge of digital technology development today. The New Media program, with its emphasis on creative thinking, DIY experimentation and innovation coupled with critical and social awareness ensures students will carry these attributes into the workplace contributing to the growth of digital media in the culture industries, as well as, the information and communications, user experience design, health and education sectors in Canada.

- **Currency and faculty SRC.** The program is structured to be responsive to the evolving field of new media practice. It does this through design. The first three semesters are composed of core, required courses followed by four semesters that provide students with numerous elective choices (both core and open elective offerings). The final two semesters of study are devoted to the development of a "New Media Thesis" project and "New Media Master Class". This ensures that students are provided with the opportunity to produce a self-directed project at an advanced level. Finally, curriculum is actively informed by faculty research and is developed in a collegial and mutually supportive environment.

- **Innovation.** The interdisciplinary nature of the New Media Program is supported by access to non-curricular spaces that encourage the integration of making with thinking in the pursuit of self-directed work. This enables experiential learning that exemplifies X University's motto: "With mind and skill".

- **Resources.** The PRT acknowledged a strong interdisciplinary core of faculty members, full-time support staff, and several dynamic physical learning and innovation spaces within the program.

- **Quality Enhancement.** Overall, it is clear the New Media program has acted on and benefited from the recommendations of the Previous Program Review. The success of many of these initiatives were reiterated in our interviews with faculty, staff, students and alumni. They also highlighted areas for continued improvement, many of which informed the proposed recommendations in the SSR. It was noted that work on some of those recommendations is already underway. The willingness of the New Media faculty, staff, and students to work collegially in annual curriculum and resource development, as well extra-curricular activities and community building is to be commended and will continue to serve the program well.

The self-study also identified areas of improvement, such as:

- **Student Engagement.** A sizable subset of each cohort wants more design and industry focused training. This group of students tend to not engage with many of the creative extracurricular and makerspace-related opportunities we offer. This creates a pedagogical challenge. How to foster creative excellence in engaged students while needing to teach to the least engaged students. These divergent needs create a structural dichotomy within the program, one that currently restricts our ability to push the boundaries of Fine Art education.

- **Space Resources.** At the time of the program's move from IMA to RTA, we had a small gallery and a large studio. The makerspace has allowed us to expand the production aspects of our capabilities. However, we lost our dedicated exhibition space. The lack of exhibition space has

meant that core courses could not put emphasis on exhibition. As a consequence, for many students, META (our fourth year show) is the only opportunity to share work publicly.

- **Student Course Selection.** As a side effect of the openness of the curriculum, students are often unsure of how to strategically pick their electives. Students have also identified confusion regarding the way course selection is determined and the frequency of course offerings, making it difficult for them to plan their pathways.

The Chair of New Media submitted a response to the PRT Report on March 14, 2022. The response to both the PRT Report and the Program's Response was submitted to the Vice-Provost Academic by the Dean of the Creative School on April 6, 2022.

The Academic Standards Committee completed its assessment of the New Media Program Review on May 5, 2022**.** The Committee indicated that a thorough, analytical and self-critical program review was conducted. The School integrated into the implementation plan feedback from students, alumni, employers and peer reviewers, and outlined a comprehensive plan for program enhancements moving forward.

The Academic Standards Committee recommends that the program continue, as well as provide a one-year follow-up report, as follows:

1. The mandated One-Year Follow-up Report be submitted by June 30, 2023 to include:
    a. An update on the status of the recommendations in the Implementation Plan
    b. A review of course outlines to ensure policy alignment

Presented to Senate for Approval: **June 7, 2022**

Start date of next Periodic Program Review: **2026-27**

SUMMARY OF THE REVIEWERS' RECOMMENDATIONS WITH THE PROGRAM'S AND DEAN'S RESPONSES

RECOMMENDATION 1. *New Hire.* **There is a strong opportunity to implement a targeted hiring approach to increase faculty diversity within the program while addressing program growth and curricular need.**

Department's Response: Advocate for a new hire with a strong EDI targeted approach. Request a position for the NM program that will support its expansion and actively recruit candidates from equity-deserving groups. A new hire with a strong EDI targeted approach. Request a position for the NM program that will support its expansion and actively recruit candidates from equity-deserving groups.

Dean's Response: The Dean's office supports the School's plan to propose a new faculty hire and will work with the program to maintain a manageable faculty to student ratio within the New Media program.

RECOMMENDATION 2. *Increase staff support hours of the Makerspace.* **Adding another staff position and increasing staff support hours would help to ensure student access to necessary technical expertise, and strengthen opportunities for mentorship, peer support, and structured learning in the space.**

Department's Response: Advocate to increase in staff support for facilities and activities. New skillsets are required to support the new curricular initiatives in gaming and interaction design. At least one of the tech staff job descriptions will need to be developed to ensure adequate support from the program's new areas of expertise.

Dean's Response: The Dean will work with the School and Human Resources to conduct a review of staff in 2022/23. A new staff hire will be considered as part of this process.

RECOMMENDATION 3. *Balance of introductory courses to advanced courses.* **We recognize that a program that values interdisciplinarity is sometimes challenged to offer advanced courses to a cohort that has divergent interests. One option may lie in the creation of an advanced "container" course that could respond to student and faculty research interests. Another option could be the creation of a summer "intensive" that is offered as an elective where students can take a "deeper dive" into a particular topic.**

Department's Response: Consider changes to the curriculum to allow greater specialization that will provide opportunities for students to delve deeper into their areas of interest and proceed to a more advanced level.

Dean's Response: The Dean's office supports the redesign and reorganization of the curriculum and will work with the Program to present these changes to Academic Standards for assessment and approval by Senate. The Program also submitted curriculum modifications to add a new required studio course in second year, which was the only year of the program that did not have a required studio course. This curriculum modification was approved by Academic Standards. The addition of a second-year studio course will ensure that a curricular pathway focused on studio-based production and experiential learning is embedded in all four years of the program

RECOMMENDATION 4. *Increase courses with an emphasis on Indigenous knowledge and learning.* **The program can align with the values of this University wide initiative by embedding Indigenous knowledge and learning into its curriculum. In addition, the acknowledgement of land and the recommendation to recognize the important role of public space in the community provides an opportunity for program faculty and students to engage with the interactive public art installation space that is being proposed for the campus.**

Department's Response: Program will review course outlines to identify areas for integrating content highlighting contributions by Indigenous artists and supporting the development of Indigenous knowledge creation. Offer additional courses that focus on Indigenous creators and knowledge.

Dean's Response: The Dean's office supports the redesign and reorganization of the curriculum and will work with the Program to present these changes to Academic Standards for assessment and approval by Senate. We support the Program's plan to enhance the integration of Indigenous knowledge and learning through the review of existing course outlines and through the addition of courses focusing on this important area.

RECOMMENDATION 5. *Expand curriculum to include gaming and/or interaction design.* **Offering courses in interaction design and/or gaming would enable the program to build critical mass in student numbers and make a case for additional faculty hires and computing resources in these areas.**

Department's Response: New Media has developed a set of proposed curricular changes that will allow students to complete modules in gaming, interaction design or new media art and has prepared the curricular paths for each.

Dean's Response: The Dean's office supports the redesign and reorganization of the curriculum and will work with the Program to present these changes to Academic Standards for assessment and approval by Senate. The School indicates in its response to the PRT that it has prepared a set of curriculum modifications that will be submitted to Academic Standards once the PPR process is complete. These curriculum changes will allow students to complete modules in gaming, interaction design or new media art. The Program has also prepared the curricular paths for each of these areas. The Dean's office supports this initiative and applauds the prompt action taken by the Program to prepare the curriculum changes and curricular paths.

RECOMMENDATION 6. *Increase advising to point students to curricular pathways within the program.* **Student course selection is identified as a "weakness" in the SWOT Analysis. This is supported by students who indicated that they had difficulty planning their elective choices and were unclear about the curricular pathways that could be explored in the program. Students also identified frustration in wanting to take courses that were listed in the program guide yet were not offered over multiple years. In addition to increasing formal advising touchpoints for students, we recommend strategic and targeted messaging about program pathways and elective offerings via the core required courses in first and second year.**

Department's Response: Support academic advisors by providing updated information and instruction on how to guide students through the new curriculum. Revise and redesign the information offered online.

Dean's Response: The Dean's office supports the Program's plan to enhance the way curricular pathways are communicated to students through academic advising and through revisions of the Program's website.

RECOMMENDATION 7. *Strengthen opportunities for communicating program narrative for New Media and possible outcomes.* **Finding ways to highlight a range of program outcomes could contribute to strengthening program identity, recruitment, and post-graduation pathways for students.**

Department's Response: Program will work in collaboration with marketing team of Dean's office to create targeted communications for recruitment.

Dean's Response: We support the Program's plan to strengthen the communication of the program's

narrative and look forward to working with the Program on the development of new recruitment materials.

RECOMMENDATION 8. *Dedicated Exhibition/Presentation Space.* **Providing students with an opportunity to professionally present their work, ups the ante for their project outcomes and raises the standards for the program as a whole. Concurrently, an archive of student work could be created from the documentation of projects that are exhibited in the space. This would benefit the program from a curatorial and historical perspective.**

Department's Response: We will prepare a study of needs and potential collaborations with programs such as Interior Design and Fashion to identify opportunities within Creative School facilities.

Dean's Response: The Dean's office supports the Program's plan to work towards a presentation space in The Creative School's facilities for the display of student work in a way that is sustainable and financially viable.

RECOMMENDATION 9. *Strengthen engagement with Library and the Zone Learning network.* **Work with the library to increase holdings (print and other media) connected to New Media topic areas supporting resources for student research. In addition, explore opportunities for increased engagement with specialized services such as The Collaboratory providing additional access to space and technology resources supporting team and project-based research.**

Department's Response: We will review curriculum to ensure these important university resources are referenced and utilized. Similarly, encourage faculty to utilize their support and resources.

Dean's Response: The program agrees with this recommendation and plans to review its curriculum to ensure these important university resources are referenced and utilized. As part of this effort, the Program will encourage faculty to utilize the support and resources of the Library and Zone Learning.

RECOMMENDATION 10. *Increase connections to industry (co-ops, field placement, internships) and the larger Toronto community.* **Many students indicated that the program could do more for job preparedness. We have noted that "Community and Urban Partnerships" is one of X University's Five Priorities. (AP, 24) As a downtown campus, there are numerous opportunities for the program to strengthen its connections to industry. Individual faculty do not need to take this on – this could be part of a university initiative. Students could engage with opportunities such as summer placements as elective offerings.**

Department's Response: Suggest that the program establish a program-specific PAC that creates valuable conversations amongst our professional partners.

Dean's Response: The Dean's office supports the creation of a program-specific PAC. We also support an in-depth appraisal of co-op, placement and internship options through an examination of exemplars from other programs in The Creative School as well as consultation with the university's Career and Co-op Centre.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Priority Recommendation #1: *Expand curriculum to include Gaming and Interaction Design*
Rationale: (short description of information from the self-study that supports the recommendation) The new media technologies that were once niche and experimental now permeate many aspects of culture and society. The expanded field of new media includes areas of specialisation such as interactive design and gaming that are interwoven with the core practices that have evolved from within fine art. Our current students are the first generation to have grown up in this iteration of interactive new media spaces. As a result, they understand society from within these mediated spaces and live within the overlapping art, design, and gaming spaces.
Implementation Actions: - Develop a proposal for an expanded New Media curriculum that allows students to focus on interactive design and gaming while building on the existing New Media Fine Art curriculum.   - Request a new hire to support the expansion into Gaming
Timeline: (What are the estimated timelines for acting on implementation of the recommendation?) 2021-22 academic year with submission of proposal to VPA by end of Spring 2022, and a planned start with the Fall 2023 cohort.
Responsibility for **a) leading initiative:** *Program Director* **b) approving recommendation, providing resources, and overall monitoring:** *Curriculum Committee, School Council, Faculty Dean, UPO, VPA*

Priority Recommendation #2 : *Better balance between introductory and advanced courses.*
Rationale: (short description of information from the self-study that supports the recommendation) This is tied to Recommendation #1. Currently, students primarily develop depth in the area of New Media Fine Art. The proposed curricular expansion will address the need for more advanced courses by providing alternative pathways in the 3rd year of the program.
Implementation Actions: Develop a proposal for an expanded New Media curriculum that allows students to focus on interactive design and gaming while building on the existing New Media Fine Art curriculum required and elective courses.
Timeline: (What are the estimated timelines for acting on implementation of the recommendation?) *e.g.* 2021-22 academic year with submission of proposal to VPA by end of Spring 2022, and a planned start with the Fall 2023 cohort.
Responsibility for **a) leading initiative:** *Program Director* **b) approving recommendation, providing resources, and overall monitoring:** *Curriculum Committee, School Council, Faculty Dean, VPA*

Priority Recommendation #3 : *Increase emphasis in the curriculum on Indigenous knowledge and learning.*
Rationale: (short description of information from the self-study that supports the recommendation) To align with the values of this University wide initiative by embedding Indigenous knowledge and learning into its curriculum.

Implementation Actions:
• *Review course outlines to identify areas for integrating content highlighting contributions by Indigenous artists and supporting the development of Indigenous knowledge creation*   • *Offer additional courses that focus on Indigenous creators and knowledge.*

Timeline: (What are the estimated timelines for acting on implementation of the recommendation?)
Begin curriculum review in Fall 2022 by examining current offerings, with an eye towards developing future offerings.

Responsibility for
a) leading initiative: *Program Faculty*   **b) approving recommendation, providing resources, and overall monitoring:** *Curriculum Committee, School Council*

Priority Recommendation #4 : Implement a strong EDI targeted approach for new hires actively recruit candidates from equity-deserving groups.
Rationale: (short description of information from the self-study that supports the recommendation)   In alignment with the current values and initiatives of the School, the New Media program continues to work on improving representation from equity-deserving groups within the Faculty.
Implementation Actions: • *Request a replacement hire to provide continuity when current Indigenous faculty retires*
Timeline: (What are the estimated timelines for acting on implementation of the recommendation?)   New hires to support Indigenous curriculum and the program's expansion into gaming will be requested for the 2022/23 hiring cycle.
Responsibility for   **a) leading initiative:** Program Director, DHC   **b) approving recommendation, providing resources, and overall monitoring:** *Department Chair, Faculty Dean*

Priority Recommendation #5 : Increase in staff support for facilities and activities.
Rationale: (short description of information from the self-study that supports the recommendation)   New skillsets are required to support the new curricular initiatives in gaming and interaction design. At least one of the tech staff job descriptions will need to be developed to ensure adequate support from the program's new areas of expertise.
Implementation Actions: • Work with departmental staff to review tech staff positions and future needs
Timeline: (What are the estimated timelines for acting on implementation of the recommendation?)   Begin technical needs review starting Fall 2022, with the goal of having additional support in place by Fall 2023.
Responsibility for   **a) leading initiative:** Program Director, Operations Manager   **b) approving recommendation, providing resources, and overall monitoring:** Department Chair, Faculty Dean

Priority Recommendation #6 : Increased student advising

Rationale: (short description of information from the self-study that supports the recommendation)
Students have identified confusion regarding course selection and frustration over the frequency of some course offerings. Students need help understanding how to use their electives to create a personalized educational pathway and consider prerequisites and other constraints such as alternate year elective offerings. This support becomes even more critical with the implementation of the new Open Elective Policy.

Implementation Actions:
- Support academic advisors by providing updated information and instruction on how to guide students through the new curriculum.
- Revise and redesign the information offered online.
- Launch a Winter orientation focused on curriculum

Timeline: (What are the estimated timelines for acting on implementation of the recommendation?)
2022/2023 academic year

Responsibility for
a) leading initiative: Program Director, department staff
b) approving recommendation, providing resources, and overall monitoring: *Department Chair*

Priority Recommendation #7 : Strengthen engagement with the Library and the Zone Learning network.

Rationale: (short description of information from the self-study that supports the recommendation)

Implementation Actions:
- Review curriculum to ensure these important university resources are referenced and utilized.
- Encourage faculty to utilize their support and resources.

Timeline: (What are the estimated timelines for acting on implementation of the recommendation?)
2022/2023 Academic year

Responsibility for
a) leading initiative: Program Director, Program Faculty
b) approving recommendation, providing resources, and overall monitoring: Department Chair

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Priority Recommendation #8 : Creation of a dedicated public presentation space.

Rationale: (short description of information from the self-study that supports the recommendation)
Public presentation is an essential part of the lifecycle of a creative project. It allows a creative project to find its audience and provides the creator with valuable feedback from that audience. Such encounters are also essential for the mobilisation of innovation.
Many students in New Media have the opportunity to exhibit their work only in their final year, which limits their creative development. An exhibition space would allow students and faculty to share their work publicly and connect the New Media program community with those of the surrounding sector.

Implementation Actions:
- *Prepare a study of needs and potential collaborations with programs such as Interior Design and Fashion to identify opportunities within Creative School facilities.*

Timeline: (What are the estimated timelines for acting on implementation of the recommendation?)
Begin development of study starting Fall 2022. Follow up on study in 23/24 academic year.

Responsibility for
a) leading initiative: Program Director
b) approving recommendation, providing resources, and overall monitoring: Department Chair, Faculty Dean

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Priority Recommendation #9 : Strengthened program narrative to better communicate professional opportunities.

Rationale: (short description of information from the self-study that supports the recommendation)
Defining New Media can be a challenge given it is a relatively new discipline in part tied to rapidly changing technologies. However, finding more opportunities for communicating and reinforcing a program narrative, one that is cumulative (years 1 - 4) and that embraces the curricular paths through the program would help to address what some students described as ambiguity in program identity. Moreover, the program acknowledges as a strength the "diversity of student interests" and the ways in which they apply their critical, technical and creative skills through employment in a number of fields. Finding ways to highlight a range of program outcomes could contribute to strengthening program identity, recruitment, and post-graduation pathways for students.

Implementation Actions:
- *Work in collaboration with marketing team of Dean's office to create targeted communications for recruitment.*

Timeline: (What are the estimated timelines for acting on implementation of the recommendation?)
Being a review of New Media's marketing strategy starting Spring 2022

Responsibility for
a) leading initiative: Program Director
b) approving recommendation, providing resources, and overall monitoring: Department Chair

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Priority Recommendation #10 : Increase connections to industry (co-ops, field placement, internships) and the larger Toronto community.

Rationale: (short description of information from the self-study that supports the recommendation)
In alignment with the University's "Community and Urban Partnerships" priority, the program must continue to strengthen its relationships within the sector, particularly at a local level.

Implementation Actions:
- Re-establish connections with local partners such as artist-run centers and cultural organizations
- Establish a program-specific PAC that creates valuable conversations amongst our
- professional partners.

Timeline: (What are the estimated timelines for acting on implementation of the recommendation?)
We will examine the implementation of a program-specific PAC starting Fall 2022, with the goal of having it in place by the end of the 2022/23 academic year.

Responsibility for
a) leading initiative: Program Director
b) approving recommendation, providing resources, and overall monitoring: Department Chair