

FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT
Evaluation of Undergraduate and Graduate Programs
Department of Visual Arts
Cyclical Review Period: 2020–2021
SCEUP: November 10, 2022
GPEC: November 21, 2022

I. Evaluated Programs – Harmonized Undergraduate and Graduate Programs

- Major in Visual Arts
- Major in Art History
- Bachelor of Fine Arts
- Master of Fine Arts

II. Outline Evaluation Process (outline of the visit)

- The final assessment report on the above programs was prepared from the following documents: (a) the self-study report produced by the academic unit, (b) the report of the external evaluation following the virtual visit, and (c) the action plan and response by the Director of Visual Arts, Jakub Zdebik, and the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Kevin Kee.
- The virtual visit took place from November 8 to 9, 2021, and both reviewers, Dominic Hardy (UQAM) and Keith Bresnahan (Ontario College of Art & Design University), met with the following individuals and groups of people: technical and administrative staff in the Department of Visual Arts; Graduate program director of the MFA in Visual Arts; students representing Art History (undergraduate) and Visual Arts (undergraduate and graduate) programs; part-time and regular professors in the Department of Visual Arts; the Vice-Provost (Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies), and the Vice-Provost (Academic Affairs); the undergraduate chairs of both Art History and Visual Arts; the Dean and Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Arts, and the Chair of the Department of Visual Arts.
- All visits were conducted virtually via Zoom meetings.
- Documents considered prior to the visit and during the preparation of this report include institutional documents on the strategic mandate and vision of uOttawa, the Self-Study Brief prepared by the Department of Visual Arts, the Curricula Vitae of professors in the Department, samples of students written and visual work, sample course syllabi, and those documents outlining the review process and guidelines for this report.

III. Summary of Reports on the Quality of Programs

This section aims to inform the unit on the strengths and weaknesses observed during the evaluation process to improve its programs.

EMPHASIZING THE STRENGTHS AND IDENTIFYING CHALLENGES

STRENGTHS

- These programs are delivered by nationally and international recognized faculty members, both on the studio and the art history and theory sides of the department.
- The external evaluators found that the “MFA, BFA and Art History programs were of excellent quality” and that student satisfaction is “high”.
- The programs are well connected with the considerable cultural and artistic resources

of the national capital region (e.g. National Gallery of Canada and other national museums, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa Art Gallery, vibrant local artistic scene).

- Experiential learning is well integrated throughout the learning objectives and curricula of the program.
- Access to highly skilled studio technicians, modern workshops, and outstanding individual studio facilities.
- These are the only bilingual programs of their type in the province.
- Innovative partnerships with the Institute of Feminist and Gender Studies in the area of decolonizing and infusing critical race, feminist and gender lens into the programs, and with the Faculty of Engineering on the STEAM Initiative are definite strengths.
- Students can benefit from the Stonecroft Lectures series, organized in partnership with the National Gallery. The Stonecroft Foundation also offers a master's scholarship to attend the Venice Biennale.
- Because the MFA program is small, it offers an excellent faculty-to-student ratio.

CHALLENGES

- Shortage of regular APUO professors, especially on the French side of Art History, and the resultant reliance on part-time APTPUO professors to teach over 60% of courses lead to challenges around ensuring the comparability of content and pedagogical standards.
- Professors who have recently retired have not been replaced; two more retirements are in the offing.
- There are gaps in the current faculty's ability to deliver courses on new media (especially in French), modernism and art history. The department's inability to consistently offer a slate of 3rd- and 4th-year art history electives may be having adverse effects on art history students' ability to complete their degree in a timely fashion.
- There is a mismatch between the increasingly diverse nature of the student body and the current faculty. There is need to increase and strengthen diversity embedded within the curriculum.
- The Visual Arts building's lack of accessibility impedes the recruitment and retention of people with physical disabilities as students, staff, and faculty.
- Despite recent renovations to the physical plant, some deficiencies remain with respect to exhibition space, storage, and ventilation.
- External evaluators note that an enhanced, even professional, gallery space could contribute greatly to the appeal of the program.
- Course titles and descriptions do not adequately reflect the diversity and innovation of the content of the Master of Fine Arts program.
- Funding for students has decreased, so the program is losing its competitiveness. Funding is also tied to the GPA, so the program is potentially losing excellent artists. The awarding of scholarships should be reviewed to take into account the portfolio.

IV. Program Improvements

The programs under evaluation are in conformity with the standards of the discipline. The following recommendations aim at maintaining or increasing the level of quality already achieved by the programs.

Recommendation 1: Hire two full-time/permanent faculty, in Media Arts and Francophone Art History.

Recommendation 2: Undertake physical modifications to bring the Visual Arts building in line with current accessibility codes.

Recommendation 3: Hire/allocate additional department-specific support staff.

Recommendation 4: That Visual Arts-specific student funding packages at all levels be restored and augmented, and that specific criteria for adjudicating student excellence for these awards rest with the Visual Arts Department, in order to allow it to determine how and when to recognize professional experience in the awarding of funding.

Recommendation 5: Construct/allocate a new public facing professional-quality exhibition space on campus.

Recommendation 6: Increase the overall credit hours for the department to offer more sections), keeping in mind the present splitting of credits between anglophone and francophone art history and introduce special topics/*Thèmes choisis* at the 2000-/3000- level.

Recommendation 7: Review and update course titles and descriptions across all programs.

Recommendation 8: Replace the current cross-faculty arts administration profile with a curatorial and museum-studies specialization in Visual Arts, supported by a new Francophone Art History hire and by a professional-quality exhibition space on campus.

Recommendation 9: Undertake consultations with students and faculty to develop mission statements for program direction and marketing.

Recommendation 10: That the Visual Arts department be prioritized for international recruitment growth strategies, with commensurate funding packages and targeted marketing outreach.

V. Action Plan

The Department has worked proactively to address those issues and challenges that are within its ability to address, e.g. the hiring of new support staff, expeditious use of funds to renovate the workshops, and re-jigging the offerings of 3rd and 4th year Art History courses to allow students to graduate in a timelier fashion. The Department is working on a clear mission statement and other challenges identified by the external examiners related to equity, diversity and inclusion, a decolonized curriculum, and related issues.

Other elements of the Department's action plan require the approval and funding of Faculty and University-level authorities, notably for any faculty hiring and for making the Visual Arts building more accessible. Implementing the Department's plans for new programs (e.g. the

proposed MA in Contemporary Art Theory, a possible Ph.D. in art praxis) may depend on decisions made at Faculty and University levels related to new hiring.

VI. Conclusion

Based on nationally and internationally recognized faculty and high-quality technicians and support staff, the Department offers a strong suit of programs in Studio and Art History.

The small enrolments and collegial atmosphere allow a strong sense of student belonging and strong relationships between students and professors.

Recent renovations to workshop spaces are welcome. The fundamental issue of the Visual Arts building being inaccessible remains a big problem.

The Department is aware of the challenges it is facing and is working on finding innovative solutions.

Schedule and Timelines

A progress report that outlines the completed actions and subsequent results will be submitted to the evaluation committee by December 15, 2024.

The next cyclical review will take place in no more than eight years, in 2027-2028. The self-study brief must be submitted no later than June 15, 2027.

Unit Response and Action Plan

Faculty:

- ARTS

Programs evaluated:

- VISUAL ARTS

Cyclical review period:

- 2020-2021

Date:

- April 28, 2022

General comments:

On March 3, 2022, the Visual Arts department was made aware of the External Review Report produced in the context of the cyclical program evaluation. We were extremely pleased with the positive evaluation of our graduate program. Given that the Department of Visual Arts has committed to providing an outstanding training and research experience, we were gratified to see that the external reviewers found that our “MFA, BFA and Art History programs were of excellent quality”, that “student satisfaction was high” and that “no major issues with the program, the learning objectives, courses or management of the programs were discovered”. The report makes 10 recommendations, of which 1 is considered high priority. We take all the recommendations seriously and feel confident that by addressing them, our graduate and undergraduate programs will be even stronger. The recommendations and our response, produced jointly by the unit and the Faculty, are included below.

Recommendation 1: Hire two full-time/permanent faculty, in Media Arts and Francophone Art History.

Unit response: Due to recent retirements and a new program (MA in Contemporary Art Theory), the reviewers deemed it necessary for the Department of Visual Arts to hire two new full-time professors. The department judges this to be an urgent action but its agency is limited since full-time hire requests have to undergo the “pitch” format at the faculty level.

Decanal response: Though the pitches were deemed compelling by COMEX members and the Dean’s Office, they were not short-listed among the 8 asks for positions forwarded to the Provost. We encourage the Department to present updated versions in next year’s competition.

Priority Level*	Actions to be undertaken	Assigned to	Timeline	Curriculum change?
1.	In April 2022, the department, following the recommendations of the external evaluation, has submitted two pitches for Media Arts and Francophone Art History.	Chair of the department.	yearly	no

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Recommendation 2: Undertake physical modifications to bring the Visual Arts building in line with current accessibility codes.

Unit response: Even if undertaking physical modifications to the Visual Arts Building is urgent, this is out of the control of the department. We deal with this issue on a semester-by-semester basis with the help of the Faculty’s Facilities’ Manager as well as with the help of the Vice-Dean of Students.

Decanal response: This is an ongoing challenge to which we are committed to finding a permanent solution.

Priority Level*	Actions to be undertaken	Assigned to	Timeline	Curriculum change?
1	Assess needs of individual students who have accessibility issues and contact the Facilities department to find solutions.	Chair, Administrative Assistant and Facilities’ Manager.	Usually at the beginning of each semester	no
	For more permanent solution, undertaking physical modifications to the Visual Arts building is out of the hands of the department.			

We are in the process, with Claudio Lorello, the Manager, Facilities planning and logistics of the Faculty of Arts to build a room at Morisset Library to accommodate students who practice studio art and cannot access the Visual Arts Building.

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Recommendation 3: Hire/Allocate additional department-specific support staff.

Unit response: This was an urgent issue, but the department has hired the necessary support staff recently. The administrative assistant was replaced, a new information agent was hired, and a store clerk/media outreach technician role has been created

Decanal response: We congratulate the Department on having moved proactively in this file.

Priority Level*	Actions to be undertaken	Assigned to	Timeline	Curriculum change?
1	The actions have been undertaken and completed	Chair	The last hire was made at the end of April 2022	no

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Recommendation 4: That Visual Arts-specific student funding packages at all levels be restored and augmented, and that specific criteria for adjudicating student excellence for these awards rest with the Visual Arts department, in order to allow it to determine how and when to recognize professional experience in the awarding of funding.

Unit response: This is not something that can be done at the department level, but we are trying to make the MFA more responsive to student’s needs and more competitive by adjusting its format.

Decanal response: According to the graduate scholarship reform implemented in Fall 2020 at the Faculty, the Fine and Performance Arts sector receives “special treatment”, all three programs benefitting from 2 extra scholarships (in comparison to other graduate programs at the Faculty). We are happy to learn that the Department is looking into ways of streamlining the MFA and are eager to assist them in that endeavour.

Priority Level*	Actions to be undertaken	Assigned to	Timeline	Curriculum change?
3	Discuss possibilities for MFA graduates, who often do not have the required CPGA, for funding solution with the Vice-Dean of Programs	Chair		
	-Another solution is to explore whether it is possible to streamline the MFA program to make it more interesting for potential candidates with the lower funding package. -In this case, in the Fall of 2022, at the Regular Professor’s Committee meeting a plan will be proposed by the Chair and the MFA chair with consultation with Grad studies and the Vice-Dean of Programs.	Chair, Graduate Chair, and Regular Professor’s Committee	4 years	yes

The number of extra scholarships mentioned in the decanal response has been lowered to 1 per unit as of 2023. The special treatment might be in discussion since the MFA is a terminal degree and is indeed different than a MA that usually leads to a PhD and not specialized career.

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Recommendation 5: Construct/allocate a new public-facing professional-quality exhibition space on campus.

Unit response: We have been in consultation with the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and with the department Facilities regarding the construction of a polyvalent space with a public-facing exhibition space. In the Fall of 2021, the department provided opinions and guidance about plans that were started in the renovation of 192 Laurier Ave. E.

Decanal response: Again, the Dean’s Office is committed to finding a permanent solution to these issues.

Priority Level*	Actions to be undertaken	Assigned to	Timeline	Curriculum change?
3.	Continue the discussion at the Regular Professor’s committee.	Chair	4-7 years	no
	Explore the idea of forming a consultation committee.	Chair	4-7 years	no
2	Consultation with the Dean and the Facilities Department are ongoing	Chair	ongoing	no

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Recommendation 6: a) Increase the overall credit-hours for the department to offer more sections), keeping in mind the present splitting of credits between anglophone and francophone art history. b) Introduce special topics/Thèmes choisis at the 2000-/3000- level. c) Consider adopting studio-seminar model for some studio courses to address media-specific gaps.

Unit response: The recommendation to increase credit-hours, introduce special topics at lower levels, and considering the change to studio course to rectify gaps in curriculum need to be considered for the efficient running of the BFA, Major in Visual Arts and Art History programs.

Decanal response: We encourage the Department to continue improving their program and student experience. The Department can be reassured that we will assist them in any way we can.

Priority Level*	Actions to be undertaken	Assigned to	Timeline	Curriculum change?
4	<p>-Recently, over the last two years, we have made major improvements to the curriculum by streamlining the Major in Visual Programs, and we have repatriated the Arts Administration courses in the Visual Arts fold, adding courses such as ART 4161/4561/4961 <i>Arts, Heritage and Policy</i>. In addition, we have made consequential changes to the way students will be progressing through the BFA by adding a studio special topics course and by getting rid of vexing prerequisites for 2nd and 3rd year studio courses to make them accessible to second- and third-year students in the BFA.</p> <p>- We are carefully considering the 2nd year art history courses and would like to introduce a generic Introduction to Contemporary Art History course.</p> <p>-Going forward, we will continue to refine the program by bringing the necessary modifications to the Regular Professors' Committee meetings, then the various program committees and finally, the Departmental Assembly.</p> <p>-Based on previous experience, these changes can take over a year to officially submit to the Faculty.</p>	Chair, MFA Chair, BFA Chair, Art History Chair	2022-2024	yes

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Recommendation 7: Review and update course titles and descriptions across all programs.

Unit response: This issue will be brought up in the September departmental committee meeting. Discussion between art history faculty members has already started about changing course titles. The art history courses are particularly affected with generic description in the university catalogue. The description will be made more descriptive.

Decanal response: We fully support this initiative.

Priority Level*	Actions to be undertaken	Assigned to	Timeline	Curriculum change?
2	Minor changes will be introduced in the period 2022-24	Chair, Art History Chair.	2022-24	yes

The process will start with the invitation of faculty to review course titles and descriptions, followed by the formulation of a request for minor changes, the approval by respective program committees (art history and bfa), the submission to departmental assembly and the minor changes forms to be duly submitted to the Faculty.

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Recommendation 8: Replace the current cross-faculty arts administration profile with a curatorial and museum-studies specialization in Visual Arts, supported by a new Francophone Art History hire and by a professional-quality exhibition space on campus.				
Unit response: This is a complex recommendation with many moving parts. Whereas the cross-faculty arts administration has already been brought into the visual arts department, the new art history hire and the exhibition space need Faculty and University initiative to be implemented.				
Decanal response: We commend the Department’s recent proposal regarding the creation of an Undergraduate Microprogram in Arts Administration. The document will be examined and voted on during the next weeks and months by the relevant committees.				
Priority Level*	Actions to be undertaken	Assigned to	Timeline	Curriculum change?
2	-The cross-faculty arts administration profile has been brought into the Visual Arts department and will be developed over the next year and a half	Chair, Art History Chair	Start in Fall 2022	yes
	-A “pitch” has been made for an Art History hire	Chair	April 2022	no
	-There are ongoing consultations about an exhibition space	Chair	No timeline commitment	no

We have been progressing with this recommendation since the Decanal response: at the behest of the Vice-Dean of programs, the chair of art history has undertaken an exploratory exercise to determine whether a Major in Museum studies would be possible. We have determined that it would be manageable as a cross-disciplinary program involving the Classics and Religious Studies Department, the History Department and the Anthropology Department in the Faculty of Social Science. This idea has been put on hold due to recent (2022-23) budget cuts. We are actively following the processes to hire a Francophone art historian. And we also would like, with the help of the Faculty and the University, to establish a street facing exhibition space.

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Recommendation 9: Undertake consultations with students and faculty to develop mission statements for program direction and marketing.

Unit response: in the fall

Decanal response: We fully support the Department’s intentions in addressing the issues below.

Priority Level*	Actions to be undertaken	Assigned to	Timeline	Curriculum change?
	We recognize the benefit of developing a mission statement for program direction and the purposes of marketing. Over the coming year, we will consult with all members of the Visual Arts department (Faculty, Staff and Students), as we look to align our undergraduate and graduate programs with the University of Ottawa’s strategic plan “Transformation 2030,” which outlines six core aspirations, including: 1) transformative learning; 2) cutting edge research; 3) a vibrant Franco-Ontarian and Franco-Canadian culture; 4) outstanding leadership and management; 5) effective governance; and, 6) a sustained commitment to our community.	Explore ideas regarding formats for strategic planning sessions (e.g., holding a retreat, forming school committees, etc.). Consult Visual Arts Committee about main format ideas and get feedback.	December 2022	no
	Schedule a mission statement planning session, ensuring representation from Faculty, Staff and Students (graduate and undergraduate student associations). Key items for discussion include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The mission statement of the Visual Arts and with respect to the graduate program in particular (CAT and MFA). 2. The bilingual environment offered to graduate students 3. Promoting collaboration within and outside of the Visual Arts 	Faculty, Graduate Students representatives, Art History Student Association, Visual Art Student Association	2023-24	no

The mission will be a responsibility of the Chair along with the Chairs of Art History, MFA and BFA. We will start proceedings during the departmental assembly of the Fall session 2023

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Recommendation 10: That the Visual Arts department be prioritized for international recruitment growth strategies, with commensurate funding packages and targeted marketing outreach.

Unit response: As part of our international recruitment growth strategies, the department hired a media outreach technician. Part of the task of media outreach will be to optimize international recruitment with the help of the international office.

Decanal response: Again, the Dean’s Office is offering its strongest support with regard to such an initiative.

Priority Level*	Actions to be undertaken	Assigned to	Timeline	Curriculum change?
2	<p>-The department chair will consult with the Art History chair, the MFA and BFA chairs in order to see how best to implement a strategy for the various needs of each program.</p> <p>-In the past, recruitment was made through art magazines that used to have a wide readership in the artistic community, recently such publication are not as affective and a need to pivot to social media is necessary.</p> <p>-With the help of the media outreach technician, hired in April 2022, the department will come up with a strategy that is commensurate with the “Transformation 2030” plan.</p> <p>-The international outreach will specifically target francophone students (e.g. in private universities in Turkey) since they qualify for a special bursary.</p>	Chair, Media Outreach Technician	May 2022- to May 2023	no

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