Cyclical Review

Executive Summary

Cyclical Review of the Graduate Program in Music

Degrees:

Master of Music
Master of Arts Music
Graduate Diploma Orchestral Studies
Graduate Diploma Piano Pedagogy Research

Submitted to the:

Graduate Program Evaluation Committee
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

February 24, 2016

Senate of the University of Ottawa

September 6, 2016
Executive Summary

Graduate Program in Music
Cyclical Review Year (2014-2015)

Approved by the Graduate Program Evaluation Committee
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
Meeting of February 24, 2016

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<th>Music</th>
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<td>Degrees</td>
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<td>Final Evaluation</td>
<td>Good quality</td>
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Significant Strengths of the Program

The School of Music offers a Master of Arts (MA) in Music as well as a Master of Music (MMus), in addition to graduate diplomas in Orchestral Studies and in Piano Pedagogy Research. Overall, the programs have been successful, combining a strong commitment to research with an innovative approach to teaching. The school’s professors are highly regarded, and many graduates have gone on to successful careers as performers, teachers and administrators, or to pursue doctoral studies at well-regarded institutions.

The Master of Arts in Music is a research-oriented degree focused on musicology, music theory and piano pedagogy. Students in the program benefit from an early involvement in research, which typically begins in the first term. This early and continued mentoring helps the vast majority of students complete the degree within the recommended two-year period. Students are very strong and engaged in the program. Financial support for students was mentioned as an attractive feature of the program, relative to similar programs. MA students also can participate in formal collaborative programs in Medieval and Renaissance Studies and in Women’s Studies, an opportunity that is not typically available in other institutions in the province, thus offering students the chance to develop an original specialization.

The Master of Music is a performance-oriented degree, with an additional focus on historical and theoretical study of music. The guitar performance specialization is noted for the acclaim it has received. Students report benefitting from both the program’s performance and research foci. Students are well-supported by strong full-time faculty as well as by a highly dedicated team of part-time professors. The majority complete the degree within the recommended two-year period. As with the MA, students report that the financial support helps to make the MMus program competitive with comparator programs.

The Graduate Diploma in Orchestral Studies and the Graduate Diploma in Piano Pedagogy are small but
successful programs, which in some cases serve as feeder programs for the Master’s degrees.

All programs benefit from proximity to the National Arts Centre, which collaborates closely with the program, including by offering master classes to students and by attracting visiting musicians from the NAC Orchestra. The program also collaborates with the Ottawa Symphony Orchestra, which creates important training opportunities for students. A particularly innovative feature of the program is the Piano Pedagogy Laboratory, which offers the possibility of conducting research on piano pedagogy using advanced technology.

Areas for Improvement and Enhancement

In addition to identifying the numerous strengths of the program offered by the School of Music, the review made several recommendations that could be pursued in order to further strengthen the graduate program in Music.

Although the unit is delivering a good quality program, the student-to-faculty ratio is slightly higher than that found at comparator universities. Some areas of the program (e.g., composition and woodwind) rely almost exclusively on part-time professors or on a single regular professor (e.g., piano pedagogy), which leaves these areas somewhat vulnerable. Succession planning will be important to ensure continuity when professors retire.

The MA program requirement to take six seminars is demanding in comparison to other programs. For students participating in a collaborative program, this requirement rises to seven, making it even more demanding. In particular, the requirement to take both of the research methods seminars (musicology and music theory) may be too onerous, and it may be beneficial to allow students to choose one or the other. A graduate symposium could also be used as a means of giving students the opportunity to present their research to peers and faculty.

It may be more logical for music composition to be part of the MMus. As well, the requirements for the recital defense in the MMus should be made clearer. The school has already begun taking steps to address these issues.

Over the years, students have expressed some dissatisfaction with MUS5900 – Introduction to Musical Research, which, depending on the instructor and the students’ perspective, has appeared to focus too much on issues related to musicology and music theory that are less relevant to performance students, or too little on research methods and too much on practice. Though it is challenging to address the needs of a diverse group, it could be helpful to adjust the focus of MUS5900 so that it addresses preparation for research in general, with a specific emphasis on preparing a recital defense.

An exciting opportunity for program development is the possibility for developing a PhD program in music to build on the existing research strengths at the school. The unit has already begun planning for this possibility, considering several different models (e.g., bi-disciplinary, autonomous). The launch of such a program would boost music research activities, to the benefit of the entire school, and PhD students would play an important role in the ecosystem of a music research area. In a similar vein, the introduction of a graduate diploma in performance could also be attractive as a pre- or post-master’s qualification.

Finally, while the school has found creative solutions that have allowed it to make the most of limited
space facilities, a larger performance space on campus would be a very welcome development.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the graduate program in music seek to:

1. Reduce the number of required courses in the MA in Music, and adjust the focus of MUS5900 so that it addresses preparation for research in general, with a specific emphasis on preparing a recital defence.
2. Continue the work that has already been started to make music composition part of the MMus and to clarify expectations for the MMus recital defence.
3. Develop formal agreements with the Faculty of Education and the School of Human Kinetics to give music students better access to relevant courses in these units.
4. Develop additional program offerings, such as a PhD in music that builds on existing strengths in research, or a graduate diploma in performance.
5. Develop, in collaboration with the Faculty of Arts, a clear faculty renewal plan to ensure continuity, reduce vulnerability to faculty loss and maintain or improve student-to-faculty ratios.

Implementation Plan

Calendar and Deadlines

All recommendations are to be addressed by the time of the next cyclical review, which will be completed within seven years and no later than the year 2021-2022.

Authorities

The authorities who are responsible for implementing and monitoring the recommendations include the Chair of the School of Music and the Director of Graduate Studies in Music, in collaboration with the Dean and Vice-Dean (Graduate Studies) of the Faculty of Arts.