

Internal Academic Review 2005-2006
Department of Film and Media and the Stage and Screen Studies Program
Internal Academic Review Committee Report to Senate

The Internal Academic Review (IAR) of the Department of Film and Media (formerly Film Studies) and the Stage and Screen Studies Program is now complete. The Internal Academic Review Committee (IARC) has taken into consideration all of the submissions related to the IAR of the Department of Film and Media and respectfully submits the following report. The IARC Report to Senate is intended to supplement the findings of the attached Review Team Report and to provide a mechanism for the Head of the Department and the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science to jointly report on the progress to date in addressing the Review Team recommendations (please see the “Outcomes” section of this report). Normally the External Consultants Report (see attached) would not form part of the public documentation but the IARC has requested and obtained permission from the External Consultants to include their report with the IARC Report to Senate. Furthermore, the IARC met with the Head of the Department of Film and Media and the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science at Film House to gain additional insight.

Summary of the Internal Academic Review of the Department of Film and Media and the Stage and Screen Studies Program

The Department of Film and Media offers well-respected and distinctive concentrator programs, including the Stage and Screen Studies program. Faculty are well known for their research and film production and the Unit is to be congratulated for its continuing efforts to form interdisciplinary collaborations of various kinds with cognate Units. The Internal Academic Review Committee (IARC) can attest to the ambience of Film House, likely a direct result of the combined energy, dedication and mutual respect of its occupants.

The IARC focused its discussions on an assessment of “the quality and suitability of the academic endeavours”¹ of the Unit in the following key areas:

Academic Programs: As noted by the external consultants, the Department of Film and Media is to be commended for its leadership in interdisciplinary activities at Queen’s since its inception in the late 1960s. The IARC encourages the Department of Film and Media to continue its interdisciplinary focus through participation in the proposed

¹ Senate Internal Academic Review Policy

The Faculty Office recognizes the important role that graduate education can play in attracting excellent faculty and students and supports in principle FILM's interest in a graduate program and in the cultural studies graduate program that is under discussion. At the same time, a graduate program would require new space, new production facilities, and supervisory time from faculty members—things that the IAR recognizes are in short

**REPORT OF THE INTERNAL ACADEMIC REVIEW TEAM
FOR FILM STUDIES**

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March 1, 2006.

Purpose

The Queen's University protocol is to perform an internal academic review of every program in the University once every seven years. The review is not based on any perceived need for review in any program, but as a necessary step to maintain the highest academic standards in all programs.

The internal academic review team is not presumed to have any specific expertise in the area under review but is intended to bring a Queen's University perspective to the process. A group of External Consultants is commissioned to perform a review of the program as part of this process. The external consultants are selected for their program-specific expertise and submit a report as part of the evaluation process. (Appendix A)

The department invests a considerable amount of time and energy in preparing its own internal review document. In this case, a three volume report was produced which presented departmental views of the current status of the department and possible future directions. In our view, this document was both extensive in it

Our team also met with the current head of the Department, Clarke Mackey and with Blaine Allen, his predecessor. Their views are well documented in the Department's Internal Academic Review Report, but we were able to get a better understanding of the dynamics of the Department from them.

After discussions among the team we have prepared this report in an effort to further the objectives of the University in maintaining and improving the quality of the Film Studies Program.

Initial Impressions

While the members of the internal academic review team were not selected for their expertise in the area, many of the members had first or second hand knowledge of the program and their initial impressions of the program were borne out by our own observations and those of the external consultants.

The Queen's University Film Studies Program is a well respected program based on critical thinking with some exposure to film production. The faculty in the program have achieved significant recognition for their research and film making activities and many are viewed as experts in their chosen field of endeavour. The program has accomplished many firsts in its history, and has an impressive list of accomplished alumni.

Within the department there is a mutual respect among members, both faculty and staff, and, seemingly, a genuine affection for each other. The students were very complimentary regarding the faculty and the interest that they have shown in the work and accomplishments of the students. The staff were viewed as being most helpful and willing to assist wherever a need arose.

The facilities, however, belie the accomplishments that the program has achieved over the years. Film House does not lend itself to the pursuit of excellence or the quiet contemplation required for scholarly research. There is a certain ambiance about Film House that most faculty, staff and students wanted to preserve. This has to do with the individuality of the space and the way in which it forms a physical manifestation of the uniqueness of the film studies community at Queen's. This aspect we wholeheartedly endorse. However, to the extent that the physical space is vastly insufficient in size and quality to support the current activities of the Department, major improvements are essential for the program is to sustain its current record of achievement.

Conclusions and Recommendations

We have reviewed the report of the external consultants and believe that the report has captured many of the essential elements of the Film Studies Program. The recommendations made in that report are consistent with our findings and go far beyond our areas of expertise in many of the specific areas relating to curriculum and pedagogy.

In addition to the external consultants report, there are a number of issues on which we want to comment and about which we wish to make recommendations. These issues are essential to enhancing the experience of everyone involved in Film Studies at Queen's.

Graduate Studies

At the moment, there is no graduate program in Film Studies. Several years ago, approval was granted for such a program, but undergraduate enrollment increased significantly and the necessary human resources to introduce graduate courses was not available. We concur with the external consultants that a graduate program is an essential component of this program, both in terms of attracting the best faculty and the best students, and maintaining a reputation for excellence. We would recommend that the necessary steps be taken to provide the resources to enable the graduate program to be implemented at the earliest opportunity.

The faculty expressed support for a "cultural studies" MA, which would tie into the cooperative efforts of other departments. We believe that this bears investigation. A Masters of Arts Administration, in conjunction with the School of Business, was suggested, as there is significant interest in this field. Since the School of Business is well regarded within the business community, their efforts, coupled with the excellent reputation of the Film Studies Department, would produce graduates with a well respected, specialized degree.

Facilities

Film House, in its current configuration, has definitely outlived its viability as a place to house the program. Apart from the inadequacy of space for various aspect of the program, the physical facilities seem to pose a danger to faculty, staff and students. We observed water leaks, physical deterioration and dangerous overcrowding conditions. From a safety perspective, we were concerned that the University might be liable for substantial loss in the event of a mishap.

On the other hand, we wish to go on record as saying that the creative ambiance that is present at Film House is something that the University should strive to maintain or duplicate when new facilities are contemplated. We know that a new Arts Campus is being proposed and that the Film Studies Department has endorsed it. However, we would encourage the University ensure that the new facilities have an ambiance that is suitable to the creative efforts of the Film Studies Department as well as possessing the required physical attributes.

In selecting a new facility, emphasis should be placed on ensuring that each department to be housed within the facility has appropriate and adequate space, as additional changes will likely not happen for some considerable time.

Students expressed concern about locating the Film Studies Department in a location that is remote from the rest of the Queen's Campus. In a practical sense, transportation would be an issue and could result in a reduction in the cross pollination of ideas as students from other Faculties or Departments would be discouraged from taking Film Studies Courses.

Equipment

The equipment available to students and faculty is inadequate. Budgetary restrictions and university wide regulations have proven to be a major impediment to upgrading and improving equipment quality. Faculty expressed the opinion that the "latest and greatest" technology was not necessarily required to hone one's movie making skills, but some improvements were required. We agree with the external consultants' recommendations that a specific line item be incorporated into the budgeting process to ensure that funds are available on an annual basis to improve and maintain the equipment available in the program.

We observed some very specific examples where students were required to operate with makeshift arrangements for lighting and animation because the facilities and equipment were not available to them.

Interdisciplinary Studies

We believe that one of the elements that can make the Film Studies Program one of the best available is co-operative activities with other disciplines throughout the University. Some efforts have been made in this area, but these efforts seem to be sporadic and based on individual professors' interests and efforts. We would suggest that a concerted effort be made to increase the number of interactions that take place between Film Studies and other departments and faculties to enhance the experience of the students across campus. We would also encourage the department to better publicize its efforts in offering interdisciplinary courses so that students are fully aware of what is available.

The students indicated that they did not feel fully welcomed by the Drama Department and, because of their unique status in Film Studies, did not feel that they truly belonged in either department. More effort should be made to include Film Studies students in acting projects and more Drama students in film projects.

Student Feedback/Evaluations

The Faculty indicated that they believe

External Consultants Report
Film Studies Internal Academic Review

Appendix A

March 1, 2006.

I. INTRODUCTION

Background

II. CONTEXT OF FILM STUDIES AND STAGE AND SCREEN STUDIES AT QUEEN'S

Film studies at Queen's University began in 1967, during a period in which film and theatre professions in Canada emerged as part of a project of nation-building founded on national film and drama with defining aesthetic standards. This was an argument of the Massey Commission: that the mature nation is known by its representations, and that artistic excellence requires disciplinary mastery. The numerous film and drama programs that subsequently emerged in universities across Canada grew into an array of contesting models, with some offering BFAs, others BAs, and still others certificate or non-degrees in community colleges as was typical of film programs in North America. Queen's was ahead of its time for two reasons: 1) it was the

develop strategic long-term planning and goals in conjunction with the university's overall strategic plan. The department should continue to emphasize film studies with a strong, but supporting, production component.

ii. Curriculum and Pedagogy

a) Long-term Planning: some faculty members indicated that the dept. was about to undertake a re-assessment of the program's curriculum. Current offerings include core courses in media literacy, film history, theory, and aesthetics during the first and second years. More specialized topics courses, that are not core, follow during third and fourth years and tend to draw on faculty members' research expertise. There seems to be a great autonomy of courses versus a coherent set of courses throughout the four years that all majors must take. As is stands, many of the current offerings are dependent on th

c) Graduate Program/ Cultural Studies: almost every faculty member interviewed identified the lack of a graduate program as a serious issue. The Department boasts a solid group of scholars and media artists, most of whom ar

committee; 2) the library should build a DVD collection; redundancy with the department's own collection is, in fact, useful and recommended; 3) the library's computer lab should include MAC workstations, and visualization software appropriate to film students should be added.

c) equipment maintenance, repair and replacement: Film is capital intensive. The only fiscally responsible way to run a film program is with a built-in line item for equipment maintenance, repair, and replacement. Standard in the field is 5% of capital worth. Most schools finance this through a fee system charged to each student enrolled in a production course. This is a "lab" fee, similar to that used in science departments like chemistry. In addition, schools often charge a lab fee in studies courses to subsidize film and video rental and purchase costs. These fees are equitable since they are charged only to students enrolled in courses that benefit directly from these fees. As for computers, the university needs to understand that MACs are necessary for film departments. For example, the editing software used by all film departments – Final Cut Pro – is only available for the MAC. Thus, it is thus critical that the university supports multiple platforms.

Recommendation: a) the university provide MAC computers and the necessary technical support for them; b) a lab fee be instituted for students enrolled in production and studies courses in the department; these fees would be used directly for equipment maintenance and repair as well as departmental film purchases and rentals.

iv: Stage and Screen

a) curriculum: Stage and Screen, a collection of Drama and Film courses, constitutes a unique "track" offering a creative solution to students wishing to study in both areas. The program deserves attention and support as it could play a central role in distinguishing Queen's from other Canadian institutions. However, to accomplish this goal there needs to be a truly integrated curriculum developed by the faculty in these two departments. At present there is only one course, STSC 300, that both integrates the disciplines and is team-taught. There are studies courses, script and play writing courses, and production courses in both departments but they are seen as separate entities. More faculty in both departments must become involved if there is to be a truly integrated and exciting program in Stage and Screen, and more team-teaching and cross-disciplinary courses are needed.

Recommendation: the teaching of at least one course at each academic level that together would constitute a "core" experience investigating the many faceted relationships between film and drama, including the use of time-based imagery in stage productions. One specific suggestion recommended by Stage and Screen students was the creation of a theory course addressing cultural theory as it relates to the intersection of film and drama. There is also need for a required team-taught acting/directing course in which students learn to act and direct for the camera.

b) space and facilities: there needs to be a serious investment into the infra-structure of the Drama Department. Its present location, in poorly renovated Theological Hall, is grossly inadequate. Spaces are cramped, even dangerously so, with low ceilings and lack of a controlled

environment (especially related to set construction). Proper and adequate storage space for sets, costumes, and props is needed. The three theater spaces -- a black box, small experimental stage, and main stage -- are potentially good but the spaces themselves are partially jerry-rigged and inadequate in all the ways cited above. Faculty and students are performing miracles by staging quality performances under such circumstances. Stage and Screen could become a strong, nationally significant program on the cutting edge of performance arts studies. We recognize that the symbiotic relationship between theory and practice, in both film and drama, is essential to the development of important new scholarship in th

Recommendation: It is clear that the pedagogical mission of the arts is so manifestly different from that of the other areas in Arts & Sciences that it makes sense to create a School of Visual and Performing Arts, combining Art, Drama, Music, and Film. We would like to note that, although not in our domain of review, we sensed some differences within the Art Department between the Art Historians and Art practitioners; this might generate a conflict for the Art Historians being separated from Arts & Sciences. It is very common among institutions with both Art History and Art practice to be in different academic colleges.

NOTE: The Vice-Principal (Academic) has determined that Appendix B: Students' Input to Film Studies Internal Academic Review includes evaluative comments which make it possible to identify individuals and therefore, while it provides useful feedback to the Unit under review, it will not be included in this report.