

# Media and Communications Studies Program Review

College of Arts

## Dean's Summary

Submitted by:

Dr. Jacqueline Nolte, Dean of the College of Arts

Accepted by:

Senate in April 2019

Academic Planning and Priorities Committee in April 2019

## MEMORANDUM

**From:** Jacqueline Nolte, Dean, College of Arts

**Date:** March 14, 2019

**RE:** Dean's Summary Report, Media and Communications Studies Program Review

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Media and Communications programs include a minor and extended minor in the Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Fine Arts degree programs, a Media and Communication Studies option in the two-year Associate of Arts degree and a certificate in Media Literacy. MACS courses also contribute to the Media Arts Degree, to the Anthropology minor and extended minor, to the Sociology minor, extended minor and major, and to the Sociology-Anthropology major. MACS courses are included as requirements or electives or are cross-listed in Communications (CMNS), Global Development Studies (GDS), Journalism (JRNL), Latin American Studies (LAS) and Music (MUSC). The Media and Communications (MACS) programs are situated within the multidisciplinary department of Social, Cultural and Media Studies (SCMS). SCMS is a department within the Faculty of Social Sciences which itself is within the College of Arts. There are two permanent MACS faculty. Other SCMS permanent faculty teach MACS through cross-listing arrangements. The occasional sessional instructor also teaches MACS courses.

This is the first program review for MACS since the introduction of minors in the late 1990s. The site visit by external reviewers took place in June 2018.

### **Contribution to the University's Strategic Goals, Vision, Mission, Plans and Values**

Reviewers noted that MACS contributes to the University's key goals, vision, mission, plans and values.

The reviewers made one recommendation that MACS could provide more opportunities with respect to the education plan goal of providing experiential learning opportunities e.g. contributing to City Studio Abbotsford.

It was noted that good initiatives were underway with respect to MACS support for Indigenization and that there is strong interest in MACS courses by International students with some concern that these students could be better supported. Note that international students comprised 9.4% of the MACS student body in 2011-12 and increased to 19.5% in 2016-7.

Enrolment levels have increased from 421 students to a total of 516 students in 2016-17. (pp 8-9, Media & Communication Studies Program Review Self-Assessment Study Report, 2018). Accordingly, the section count has grown from 13 MACS sections offered in 20011-13 to 19 sections in 2018.

The number of students declaring MACS minors increased from 12 students in 2011-12 to 27 students in 2016-17. The MACS extended minor showed a similar increase over the years, growing from 5 and 14 in its first couple of years to 34 in 2016-17. (pp 8-9, Media & Communication Studies Program Review Self-Assessment Study Report, 2018).

Graduation numbers from programs are notably lower, with the number of graduates in the minor ranging between 5 and 8 and extended minors ranging between 2 and 12, with 6 graduates in 2016-17. This indicates issues with retention in the dedicated MACS programs even though MACS courses continue to be popular.

The certificate in Media Literacy shows stronger growth in graduates, from 2, 5, 9, 16, 12 and 14 in the period extending from 2011-12 to 2016-17. (pp 8-9, Media & Communication Studies Program Review Self-Assessment Study Report, 2018).

### **Alignment with Institutional Learning Outcomes**

External reviewers noted that MACS should complete Curriculum Mapping and that this be accomplished with the assistance of the Teaching and Learning Centre. The reviewers noted that the Department of SCMS needs to prioritize the Curriculum Mapping exercise and assist MACS in completing this task.

External reviewers could not identify the flow of courses, alignments, gaps, and redundancies. They recognized that the first and second year courses were initially developed to allow for transfer credit to the School of Communication at Simon Fraser University but observed that MACS courses at third and fourth year levels appeared to depend upon faculty initiative rather than a systemic curriculum plan. The lack of an overall plan was a concern, given the desire to make the best strategic use of this small program. It was noted that this was not indicative of a lack of integrity or quality but that it signalled missed opportunities to draw on the expertise of university-wide services to analyze and enhance teaching and the program. MACS has now started the Curriculum Mapping process and will seek assistance from Teaching and Learning Centre.

The following recommendations were made with respect to laddering pathways into credentials:

i) Create laddering pathways for the Bachelor of Media Arts and Bachelor of Fine Arts from the existing certificate and Associate of Arts programs. MACS should work closely with the BMA program committee to accomplish this and attend to this in detail (p11).

The program area and the dean are in agreement with this. Faculty members will adapt the Associate of Arts and the Media Literacy certificate to transition into the BMA and the MACS extended minor in the BFA

ii) Liaise with Visual Arts regarding Film Studies to incorporate MACS more directly into Film Studies at UFV and ensure MACS maintains its collegial interdisciplinarity across boundaries within the institution.

There is agreement on this recommendation.

iii) Medium to long-term planning could include laddering these programs into a new SOC/MACS major in the BA. This would accommodate those students interested in more theory and media critique in the tradition of cultural studies but at this point in time, with only two faculty members, the program cannot offer a major.

The dean and program area are in agreement that faculty focus their energies on support for the BMA. Following the successful establishment of the BMA, the faculty members are interested in collaborating on a SOC/MACS major based on the model of the SOC/ANTH major.

Reviewers recommended that faculty members undertake a systematic approach to what MACS will and will not offer to other programs and consider what other programs can offer to MACS. They recommended greater engagement with the Communications Department, with attention to the overlaps in curriculum.

Faculty members have agreed to systematically go through MACS course offerings and those in other areas to seek out correspondences so as to build on affinities. Faculty members will assess the courses they have developed for other areas to assess currency and relevance to their program.

### **Ministry, Professional/Industry and Academic Standards**

Reviewers conclude that “[o]n the basis of the information provided through curriculum vitae, course outlines, student surveys and interviews, enrolment figures, colleague and Dean commentary, the

external reviewers believe that the MACS courses offered do meet a good to high standard compared to other Media Studies / Communication courses and programs available in British Columbia.” (p8, Program Review External Review Report).

Reviewers note that “courses offered through the MACS program are comparable to courses offered in other academic institutions in B.C. and across Canada. With the program originally established with the idea that students would transfer to SFU in order to complete the last two years of their BA, it now makes sense to tailor the program to the clear majority of Fraser Valley students at UFV who state that they want to remain at UFV to complete their undergraduate degree.” (p8, Program Review External Review Report). They note that “MACS most definitely has strengths to build on. Perhaps most critical to the success of a small program is it being led by two committed and effective faculty. - collegial very popular with students – strong levels of student engagement and have been successful in mentoring students towards varied career goals.” (p 2, Program Review External Review Report).

### **Standards of Educational Practices**

The reviewers note that there is a reasonable basis for concluding that a very good standard is met both with regard to UFV’s own criteria and compared to similar programs and educational institutions. They note that the program and course offerings are up-to-date and that they reflect developments in the discipline and are relevant and forward-looking. They also note the dedication of faculty to their vocation and to student growth engaged citizenship. (p9, Program Review External Review Report).

### **Utilization of Resources**

Reviewers appreciated the available facilities and library collection. They were less certain of effective use by faculty members of the Office of the Associate Vice-President Research, Engagement and Graduate Studies, Teaching and Learning, and Experiential Learning. The use of these services was pointed to as important for planning and was noted as related to the number of sections being taught by faculty whose teaching of overloads was taking precedence over other tasks, most notably curriculum mapping.

The reviewers note that in terms of weaknesses or areas for focused improvement, the most glaring is an over-reliance on two faculty members over an extended period of time. “The excessive teaching loads

(overloads contributing to a ten-course teaching load) mean that there will be less time available for research and planning time.”(p11, Program Review External Review Report.)

### **Conclusion: Overview and Recommendations**

Additional recommendations as relevant to the dean’s scope letter included the following recommendations:

i) We recommend MACS to stay within SCMS for the short to medium term (next 2-5 years), while developing a core presence in the Bachelor of Media Arts / MEDA.

The program area and dean agree to this in the immediate future, while MACS faculty work toward taking on administrative duties for the BMA. Conversations are underway regarding the long term vision of MACS in Arts.

ii). Hiring of new MACS positions:

- a. The reviewers recommended an additional full-time hire in MACS, with this individual able to bridge to the applied MEDA courses. This hire could teach Global Media and Digital Media, as well as having the potential to teach Video Games, Gender & Sexuality, Ethnic or Indigenous Media, and Film Studies. Demand has grown and this additional faculty member could obviate excessive overloads and help expand the scope of offerings. This hire could be shared with SOC, ANTH, MEDA or CMNS
- b. The reviewers recommended that, contingent on budget, an additional half-time position be created with a specialized focus on Digital Media. Important areas of teaching could include data mining, digital surveillance, social media and new media and technology.

The recommendation is that a new hire have an action-research orientation, whatever the academic concentration, as this would work well both within the Bachelor of Media Arts and with the university emphasis upon experiential learning. It was recommended that the person be a mid-level academic or one with professional practice experience, who would have demonstrated leadership / administrative experience and be an effective leader and advocate for the program within the broader context of UFV.

The program area and dean are in agreement on the need to hire into the area particularly with respect to a focus on Digital Media.

iii). Reviewers recommended MACS form an External Program Advisory Committee or attend to such an advisory group around the Bachelor of Media Arts.

MACS faculty members will help with the formation of the BMA Advisory Committee with a view to seeking assistance in planning for future curriculum developments and related matters.

iv) Reviewers recommend that MACS stay with its current department name: Media and Communication Studies (MACS).

Faculty members and the dean are in agreement.

v) Reviewers advised that current faculty teach less than loads of ten courses per year and widen its reliance on sessionals. This way, core service and curriculum work can be attended to. MACS faculty need to pay more attention to the marketing of their program to shift the program from being an afterthought to a “destination program” (p. 15).

MACS faculty members acknowledge that this is a good strategy. Faculty members recognize that less teaching would allow for focused attention to recruitment and marketing, including undertaking outreach to students in Fraser Valley junior and high schools and the Sto:lo nation. Less teaching would also allow for more systematic tracking of alumni following graduation from UFV, using this data in future recruitment for the program. Less teaching would allow for the pursuit of further faculty professional development and research, thereby contributing to future promotion through the ranks.

***Action Plan***

**Action**

**Timeline**

MACS stays within Social, Cultural and Media Studies

*Short term*

MACS develops a core presence in the Bachelor of Media Arts/MEDA	<i>Immediate and ongoing</i>
MACS takes on administrative duties for the BMA	<i>By Fall 2020</i>
MACS adapts its Associate of Arts program to facilitate a transition into the BMA and the BFA extended minor	<i>By Fall 2020</i>
MACS adjusts the Media Literacy certificate to ensure better articulation into the BMA and the BFA extended minor	<i>Fall 2019</i>
MACS collaborates with Sociology to develop a SOC/MACS major	<i>Possibly by Fall 2022</i>
MACS looks into increasing its involvement with the Film Studies program	<i>By Fall 2020</i>
MACS assesses and prioritizes its service courses and possible use of courses from other areas in its programs	<i>Fall 2019</i>
MACS looks into housing the Introduction to Journalism certificate and adapting it to changing circumstances	<i>Done</i>
MACS seeks to build on its interconnections with the Department of Communications	<i>Ongoing</i>
MACS hires a new full-time instructor with a specialized focus on Digital Media, either as a dedicated MACS instructor or as a MACS/ANTH or MACS/SOC instructor	<i>By Fall 2020</i>



MACS hires a new half-time instructor, also with a specialized focus on Digital Media	<i>By Fall 2022, contingent on demand</i>
MACS completes Curriculum Mapping	<i>By Winter 2020</i>
MACS collaborates on the creation of an External Program Advisory Committee for the BMA	<i>Completed by Fall 2020</i>
MACS stays with its current department name: Media and Communication Studies (MACS)	<i>Immediate</i>
Faculty members do fewer than the equivalent of ten sections per year	<i>By Fall 2020</i>
MACS conducts interviews for sessional instructors	<i>Fall 2019</i>
MACS publicizes its programs	<i>Following the hiring of a new full-time instructor</i>
MACS explores further experiential learning opportunities with CityStudio Abbotsford	<i>Fall 2019</i>