

Theatre

College of Arts

Dean's Summary

Submitted by:

Dr. Sylvie Murray, Dean, College of Arts

Accepted by:

Senate in February 2023

Academic Planning and Priorities Committee in January 2023

MEMORANDUM

Academic Planning and Priorities Committee

APPC Chair: James Mandigo

APPC Assistant: Melinda Saretzky

TO: Gerry Palmer, Vice Chair, Senate

FROM: James Mandigo, Chair, Academic Planning and Priorities Committee

CC: Sylvie Murray, Dean, College of Arts

Claire Carolan, Associate Director, Program Development and Quality Assurance

DATE: January 26, 2023

RE: Theatre Program Review

The Theatre Program within the College of Arts, Faculty of Humanities underwent a program review in 2021-22. The Academic Planning and Priorities Committee reviewed all of the documentation related to the program review and accepted them at its January 25, 2023 meeting and recommend to Senate for approval.

The Program Working Group was commended on the great work of the self-study. It was noted that they had a great external team. This was the first review of the program since moving from the Chilliwack North campus, and they are proud of the accomplishments as the move had provided some challenges. Lots of curriculum work was done and it was noted that greater enrolments is expected with the opening of the Multimedia performance lab set to open in Fall 2024.

SUGGESTED MOTION:

THAT Senate accept the Dean's Summary Report of the Theatre Program Review as presented.

Attachments:

- Memo to APPC
- Dean's Summary Report

Remainder of the documents located:

- UFV Drive: H:\UFVinfo\APPC
- Blackboard: COM-APPC (Senate Committee – APPC)

Dean's Summary Report, Theatre Program Review, School of Creative Arts

Dr. Sylvie Murray, Dean of Arts, January 11, 2022

Introduction

Program review for the Theatre program occurred in 2021-2022, in accordance with Policy 189, and culminated with a site visit on May 4 and 5, 2022. The External Review Report (ERR) was received in late May and the unit response was provided in mid-September 2022.

The Program Review was informed by the Dean's scope letter and a self-study conducted by the School director and two Theatre faculty members. The External Review Committee (ERC) met with several stakeholders during the site visit, including the School director, administrative staff, technical staff, Theatre faculty and students, the Dean and Associate Deans, the Vice-Provost, Academic, the AVP, Research, Engagement and Graduate Studies, the AVP, Institutional Research and Planning and a Research Analyst, the Senior Advisor to Indigenous Affairs, an Academic advisor, a Teaching and Learning Specialist, and the Liaison librarian responsible for the program.

The Theatre program is administered by the School of Creative Arts within the Faculty of Humanities, College of Arts. The program is delivered by four permanent faculty members and, in recent years, three sessional instructors.

Programs under review are the Theatre Major (Bachelor of Arts), the Theatre Extended Minor and Minor, the Theatre Diploma and the Associate of Arts degree—Theatre Option. This is the first external review of the program since its relocation to the Abbotsford campus.

The School and the Dean wish to express their sincere gratitude to the external reviewers for their time, energy and thoughtfulness. The external reviewers commended the Theatre faculty for their thorough and thoughtful self-study, for their energy, intelligence and dedication, and for their and the technical staff's commitment to the program. They noted that "students applauded [them] for their dedication to them as learners."

Their recommendations are made with the explicit request that "changes be made in stages to avoid burn-out of the faculty and staff."

The external reviewers urge that recommendations related to facilities and the curriculum be given priority. Regarding facilities, their reminder of the impact on the program of not having had appropriate space to mount productions since the program moved out of Chilliwack North is important: "Currently, performances are produced in a converted classroom that functions as a small black box theatre. This space is woefully inadequate to support any performances that employ technologies." Regarding curriculum, they recognize the curriculum mapping work undertaken by the Theatre faculty and note that it is "an important point of departure that requires follow-up in terms of reviewing course-offerings to ensure that they are appropriate to the size of the program and use resources effectively."

I commend the School director and Theatre faculty for their rigorous and strategic response to the recommendations presented by the external reviewers. I am pleased that the plan to renovate part of the K building to create a Multimedia Performance Lab which will provide pedagogically appropriate

facilities in Abbotsford is now in the final approval stage with a project completion date in summer 2024.

The faculty have continued to lay the groundwork for curriculum revisions through Fall 2022 and their response to the external recommendations is strategically designed to ensure that curriculum renewal is accomplished in time for Fall 2024, to coincide with the opening of the new facilities. I applaud their overall strategic vision and their systematic approach to getting the work done. To quote from their response to the review:

“Our strategy will be based on centering the program’s articulated goals of student and community engagement, integration of research and praxis, promotion of digital performance, inter- and transdisciplinarity, and sustainability (pp. 13-15 of self study). Curriculum revision will emphasize aligning with the strategic enrolment management plan; the effective use of current resources, particularly in relation to technical theatre and design instruction and to leveraging resources available at the School level to support the area; the ability to scale the program based on future facilities and a projected growth in enrolment when K building renos are completed; and a sustainable approach to theatre production activities, both in relation to environmental sustainability and in relation to staff, faculty, and student time.”

“In Winter 2023, once we have confirmed information about K building renovations, faculty will participate in curriculum ‘bootcamp,’ which will include drafting program learning outcomes, outlining the program’s spine and a revised production season, determining the role of electives (and potentially streamlining curriculum), and revising technical theatre courses. Our hope would be to launch a revised Major, Minor, and Extended Minor, with new/revised courses and a new approach to the season of theatre, no later than Fall 2024.”

What follows is the detailed response provided by the unit and the School Director, and an action plan, which I endorse.

Recommendation	Response
1. Establish priorities in terms of the continuing revitalization of the program and implement changes strategically so as to avoid faculty burnout.	We agree that prioritizing recommendations is essential and recognize that we will need to implement changes strategically and sequentially in order to create sustainable change.
2. Give consideration to revising titles and descriptions of courses so that they are meaningful to students and timetabling these courses strategically.	We will change titles and official course descriptions as we prepare revised/new course outlines. We will develop a plan for offering spine and elective courses to maximize enrolment potential as new curriculum is launched.
3. Identify and establish the “spine” of the program. This should be based on what a graduating student might look like and what skills and	We agree with this recommendation and see this as the key action item for faculty. However, as we develop a “spine,” we should also take into consideration the reality of student completion

<p>understandings you believe are important for them to have. Identify and scaffold required course offerings over the four years for the majors and minors according to this spine and make these offerings and degree trajectories more attractive and easier to understand. Theatre Majors and Minors would then be shepherded into these core courses to maintain sufficient enrolment at all levels. Map skill development as well as content throughout all four years so that upper level courses build upon skills and understandings learned in the lower-level courses. Permanent faculty or continuing Sessionals should teach these core courses to ensure curriculum continuity.</p>	<p>(i.e., for many students, it is more sustainable to take 6-8 years to complete a BA). We also need to balance the promise of a more prescriptive spine against the diverse academic/creative interests and life circumstances of our students and ensure that the program does not become too restrictive for students to complete it successfully or for it to be implemented in a sustainable way.</p>
<p>4. Continue to offer lower-level courses for international students and non-majors such as “Movement for Living and Acting for Work and Life” and offer popular upper-level courses such as “Theatre for Young Audiences” and the “History of Musical Theatre” on a regular basis. These high-enrolment courses help offset lower enrolment studio classes. They reflect the interests of students who take theatre classes at UFV. To avoid low enrolments, schedule these elective courses strategically so that courses of similar content or structure aren’t offered concurrently.</p>	<p>We will continue to offer lower-level electives such as THEA 111 and THEA 210. As we revise upper-level electives, we will consider the popularity of our current electives in the context of overall revisions to the upper-level of theatre programs.</p>
<p>5. Explore more cross-listing opportunities with English (e.g., Canadian Drama, Topics in Drama, Stand-up Comedy). Invite English to include Theatre course in its program requirements (e.g., Theatre 302: Canadian Performance Histories).</p>	<p>We are not going to introduce any new cross-listed courses, but will instead either use the SOCA (Scholarship of Creative Arts) course code to designate creative, interdisciplinary courses or will request that THEA courses be included in program options in other programs. We will meet with English to discuss having Theatre courses meet English program requirements. This is a lower priority item.</p>
<p>6. Explore possibilities for collaboration between Theatre and Creative Writing</p>	<p>We agree with this recommendation in principle; however, it would require resources and planning to coordinate. This is a lower priority item.</p>

<p>courses and students, including 200- and 300-level playwriting and screenwriting courses in English.</p>	
<p>7. List courses in Media Arts, Visual Arts, Creative Writing and the like as options. This leverages faculty resources from other programs, encourages interdisciplinarity and relieves theatre faculty to focus on priority theatre courses.</p>	<p>We agree with this recommendation and will consider how to implement it as part of program revisions. Including such courses as program electives will aid in the scalability of the revised program (providing more options for students without requiring Theatre to offer additional sections).</p>
<p>8. Design courses that will meet program requirements in multiple departments in SoCA. Work with other programs in SoCA to either create Theatre courses that serve other SoCA programs or mandate existing courses as requirements for other SoCA programs. This bolsters enrolment in Theatre and encourages interdisciplinarity within SoCA. Title them in a way that will attract students.</p>	<p>This is underway, e.g. THEA courses are required in the Bachelor of Media Arts program (one of THEA 111 or THEA 112, THEA 205). The SoCA Curriculum Committee and/or School Council provides feedback on course offerings that could meet program requirements in other SoCA programs. Further action on this will follow revisions to Theatre programs.</p>
<p>9. In addition to SOCA 401 (Critical Theory: Creative Arts), explore smaller, practical, interdisciplinary engagements or projects/collaborations within and across existing SoCA courses.</p>	<p>The School is currently undertaking this at the curricular level, with the first SOCA (Scholarship of Creative Arts) course (SOCA 401) offered in Fall 2022 and a second SOCA course (SOCA 301: Race, Place, and Space) approved at UEC in Fall 2022.</p> <p>Faculty-led projects involving students in different classes could be undertaken with some pre-planning (e.g. timetabling courses working on a project at the same time); this could be encouraged through discussion at School Council meetings.</p>
<p>10. Reduce the number of independent or directed study courses being offered by individual faculty members. Independent study courses should be an exceptional occurrence.</p>	<p>We agree, particularly in relation to offering IS sections of courses required for program completion. As we revise upper-level curriculum, we can consider how courses might allow more choice for students to undertake independent research/creative work as part of regularly timetabled courses. One option might be an upper-level “creative projects” course in which students create individual projects and receive group mentorships and faculty/staff support, with a showcase of their work. We believe that DS courses can play an important role for</p>

	students, particularly those with specific interests not addressed in our curriculum or with particular career plans (e.g. graduate programs), but that these should be offered judiciously, not be relied upon for students to complete their programs.
11. Discontinue the Associate of Arts Degree.	Agree.
12. Design learning modules for technical theatre that students could do independently or under the supervision of staff. These might include videos (and cheat sheets) for lighting boards, sound boards, projectors and projection, props (wood shop), or stage management. They might be designed for credit, as a certificate, or simply as ancillary resources for production classes.	We agree with this recommendation, and think that it could be implemented at a School level. This could potentially provide a way for students to gain new skills and ensure responsive, technical curriculum. One possibility might be to create a suite of one-credit modules, designed to be delivered in alternative formats (e.g. 4 evenings in a row, a weekend), that complement program requirements delivered in more traditional 13-week formats.
13. Shore up a trajectory of technical theatre. Perhaps offer one course per year for majors and minors. Technical theatre courses could progress alongside required courses in other areas, becoming progressively more sophisticated and/or reaching into the realm of computational arts and live performance. With the evolution of projection and lighting software, this is an area that could be developed in collaboration with Media Studies.	We will revise technical theatre courses, considering how to include technical/design training in the “spine” and how to spread out training across three years of courses. At this time, we do not have the resources or program declarations to increase the overall number of sections devoted to technical theatre and theatre practicums, but we think we can achieve this by strategically redesigning the curriculum and complementing it with above technical modules.
14. Review the performance/production season and encourages perhaps a “sister event” each year which allows individual students creative expression through alternative (and manageable) performative engagements in the community.	The area will move to a single “mainstage” faculty-directed production and complement this with other less-intensive performance activities basis (e.g. student-directed works, workshop-style performance, student ensemble project, community-based activities). As part of curriculum revision, we will determine what performance activities will be program requirements.
15. Improve communication between SoCA and College of Arts advising. Given that Theatre is often housed within BFA programs as it is within BA programs (indeed, at UFV, Theatre is	We would like for Theatre Majors to be assigned to the BFA advisor rather than one of the BA advisors. The Dean’s office would need to discuss this with the Director of Advising.

<p>both a BA and BFA option), the panelists suggest that consideration be given to shifting the responsibility for advising to a BFA advisor. This also aligns with publicity and promotion for SoCA events.</p>	
<p>16. Consider the value of separate accounts for Theatre and SoCA on social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter and Facebook, perhaps through hiring a student on work study to support this mode of outreach.</p>	<p>SoCA is aware of this need and is determining how to use its resources to promote courses, activities, and events. We are planning to redistribute some staff responsibilities so that we better support and prioritize communication to students).</p> <p>SoCA has discontinued area-specific social media accounts, and staff will ensure that Theatre’s previous level of engagement (which was quite high) is able to continue with SoCA accounts.</p>
<p>17. Offer more community-engaged experiential learning assignments in the upper-level courses to create more connections with community, to provide contextual and applied learning opportunities, and to allow students more creative agency.</p>	<p>As we revise curriculum, we plan for community-engaged work to be included in the “spine” of the program, as well as in electives like our current applied theatre course. We would also like to investigate this as we move in new directions with the production season. We are also interested in developing more partnerships for students to undertake external practicum courses with community-based organizations.</p>
<p>18. Secure space that is appropriate for theatrical production and that allows the incorporation of technologies, including immersive media.</p>	<p>Plans for renovations to K building are underway, with the goal of having the RFP out in late January 2023. The Provost’s office has contracted Creative Futures to assess how to ensure capital projects can support Theatre, Media Arts, and Film Production as the areas and the disciplines develop over the next 20 years.</p>
<p>19. Ensure that the proposed new Multimedia Performance Lab be user friendly and highly accessible to students.</p>	<p>The Multimedia Performance Lab scope meetings should include theatre/SoCA staff representation, to ensure that technical systems are user-friendly. Once the facility is open, we will develop a training plan to support student use of spaces.</p>
<p>20. Institute a digital system for scheduling activities in shared spaces.</p>	<p>This is underway at the School level and planning for this will include the Theatre production Manager. When K building renovations are completed, the School Director will need to develop priorities for space booking and then work with the Production Manager and the School’s IT & Media Coordinator to ensure space use is well managed with student use prioritized.</p>

<p>21. Retain control over scheduling in the current “blackbox theatre” and other theatre classrooms and workspaces in D building. These spaces are crucial for teaching classes, other techniques of performances, and smaller engagements.</p>	<p>The School Director will work with the Dean’s Office, Registrar, and Scheduling to ensure D105 continues to be a specialized theatre space and to continue monitoring how D104 and D115 are scheduled. The Production Manager will track usage of the space to ensure there is data to support Theatre’s continuing control of spaces in D building.</p>
<p>22. Redefine and redistribute staff roles and responsibilities to better serve the program’s new vision of more agile and interdisciplinary practices. If the new Multimedia Performance Lab is built, then a Technical Director will be necessary for this space, also contributing to the need for a reshuffling of existing staff positions.</p>	<p>The School Director will need to discuss redefinitions of staff roles with the Dean’s office and HR. The area is hiring a Technical Coordinator in Fall 2022 to replace the current technical coordinator, who is retiring, and this position will be equivalent to a TD. When the new space opens, the School Director will need to work with the Dean’s Office to ensure that the new space is appropriately staffed (e.g. increasing the Technical Coordinator’s position to 100%, hiring a technician and/or carpenter).</p>
<p>23. Strategically hire more local practitioners to offer workshops, direct projects, or teach courses</p>	<p>This is a recommendation we will need to undertake strategically and ethically. Sessional pay (which is what a guest director receives) is extremely low, particularly given the demands on a guest director. We will be able to resume our Ashland Guest Artist program in 2022-23, which will allow us to bring at least 2 artists to campus. We can also introduce a more coordinated approach to in-class guests to make more workshops open to students across the program, when appropriate. We would like to introduce summer artist residencies, however this is contingent on having a technical coordinator or technician on contract during the summer months.</p>

Action Plan

Curriculum Revision

Action	Recommendation	Timeframe
<p>Revise program learning outcomes for Major, Minor, Extended Minor, Diploma</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>Completed in December 2022</p>
<p>Revise production season to reduce to single mainstage and additional less-intensive activities</p>	<p>14</p>	<p>2023-24 season will include small class-based public projects and Climate Change project in fall and faculty-</p>

		directed mainstage and directing showcase in winter.
Outline “spine” of program, including technical theatre courses	3, 13, 17	Completed December 2022;
Evaluate “elective” courses (i.e. non-spine) and determine whether to continue, revise, or discontinue offering	4	Completed December 2022.
Assess courses from other disciplines for inclusion in Theatre programs	7	Completed December 2022.
Redesign technical theatre curriculum, spreading courses over 3 years of study	13	Course outlines to be developed Winter 2023.
Create learning modules for technical theatre	12	Spring 2023
Increase community engaged work in spine and electives	17	New course outlines will be developed Winter 2023.
Revise existing program requirements (calendar copy) to reflect spine, electives, new technical theatre curriculum, new season of theatre	2, 3, 7, 12, 13, 14, 17	Drafted in December 2022, plan to have program package ready for School curriculum approval by end of Spring 2023.
Develop enrolment/course offering plan to deliver revised programs	2, 4	Winter 2023.
Revise/create course outlines for revised program requirements	2, 3, 8, 12, 13, 14, 17	Spring 2023, moving from 100-level to 400-level.

Other Items

Action	Recommendation Reference	Timeframe
Explore ideas for SOCA coded courses to increase interdisciplinary course offerings and ideas for interdisciplinary projects/engagements within SOCA courses	5, 9	Preliminary discussion Winter 2023, completion/outcome TBD
Explore possible collaborations with English	5, 6	Preliminary discussion Fall 2023, completion/outcome TBD
Reduce IS/DS course offerings	10	This began in Fall 2022, goal of not offering IS sections to facilitate student program completion once new programs are rolled out.
Discontinue Associate of Arts Degree	11	Proposal is being sent to College of Arts Council in January 2023.
Move theatre advising to the BFA/BMA advisor	15	Preliminary discussion Winter 2023.

Increase practicum opportunities for theatre students	17	Ongoing
Multimedia performance lab renovation, including user-friendly technology	18, 19	Target completion: September 2024
Digital system for scheduling SOCA-controlled spaces	20, 21	Completed January 2023, add MMPL when it opens
Hire Technical Coordinator	22	Completed, hire started work January 2023.
Discuss School admin staff roles with Dean's office	22	Winter 2023.
Hire more local practitioners to offer workshops	23	Ongoing
Hire practitioners to direct/teach classes	23	Begin in Fall 2024, as new curriculum rolled out