

Visual Arts Program Review

Faculty of Humanities, College of Arts

Dean's Summary

Submitted by:
Dr. Jacqueline Nolte, Dean of the College of Arts

Accepted by:
Senate in February 2016
Academic Planning and Priorities Committee in January 2016

Program and Unit Review: Visual Arts

Dean's Summary Report

Dr. Jacqueline Nolte

December 2015

The Visual Arts Department offers a Visual Arts Major and an Art History Extended Minor and Minor in the BFA. It also offers an Extended Studies Minor and Minor in Visual Art and in Art History in the BA, a Diploma in Visual Arts, an Indigenous Studies Arts Certificate and an Extended Studies Certificate in Visual Arts.

Program content is currently delivered by nine full time faculty members – five of whom have full contracts, four of whom have 6/7 contracts and one of whom has a 5/7 contract - and a range of sessional instructors. VA has 64 sections taught by its fulltime faculty and 20 sections in the part time budget.

In May 2015, External Program Review Committee (PRC) members conducted a two-day site visit. The PRC met with VA faculty, staff, current students, alumni, the BFA Educational Advisor, the Director of Teaching and Learning and the Dean and Associate Deans of the College of Arts. The PRC also toured VA facilities on campus, and relevant areas of the UFV Library.

The committee identified number of issues for the department going forward, namely the need to clarify long term planning and vision, program coherence and curriculum, space management, the role of faculty in research, and student experience and professionalization. They affirmed the academic credibility of all of the programs reviewed and concluded with the following statement:

“The VA Department has a crucial role to play in advancing and marketing UFV’s strategic goals. The learning that takes place in this Department—the project based focus of VA instruction, the rich, Instructor intensive interactions that the students value as part of their VA experience, and the commitment to critical practice and reflection on society and culture—reflects the core values and mission of the university. The Department should be commended for being so actively involved in the Faculty of Humanities, College of Arts at the University of the Fraser Valley.”

PART ONE: External Committee Recommendations and Dean's Summary of Actions

A. Recommendations regarding Size, Structure and Administration of the VA Department

Recommendation: Consider undertaking a visioning process related to the mission, vision, and goals of the VA Department. Clearly identify the department’s core strengths based on current faculty expertise. Consider further growth within the program to help build even greater student demand.

Action: The department has since held a two-day strategic visioning retreat facilitated by the Development Director of PuSh International Performing Arts Festival. Faculty were enthusiastic and are now working through the documents generated by the retreat. The information and direction gained at the sessions was shared at the January VA Department meeting and will be further articulated at upcoming VA Program Committee meetings. The department is exploring strategies to

raise its profile in the community and strategies to ensure that VA applicants are provided with targeted material to encourage conversion to applications. The Department is working to refine its mission, vision, and goals.

Alignment of the VA Department with UFV's Strategic Plan and Goals

Recommendation: The PRC noted how well VA aligns with institutional goals, suggesting that "...the department can do more to model its pedagogical practices for the rest of the university and to publicize its vital contributions to the community."

Action: The department is exploring ways to do this by means of rotating responsibility. It is noteworthy that VA department members are involved in a number of Arts-wide initiatives, including the BA Task Force, the College of Arts Reorganization Committee, the BFA Curriculum Committee plus various indigenization initiatives. Their department reports are circulated via the Arts heads' agenda packages and the President's Report to the Board.

B. Recommendations regarding Art Studio Curriculum

Recommendation: Consider the introduction of Area Coordinators to facilitate curriculum development and discussion.

Action: The following Area Coordinators have been established to facilitate curriculum development: Foundations; Capstone; Art History, Photography, Print Media, Painting, Sculpture, and Foundations.

Recommendation: Consider Curriculum Mapping to assess the relationships between the VA Diploma, the VA Major, Extended Minors and Minors, and consider possible streamlining of the various program pathways with the objective of pathway simplification. Part of this mapping exercise should extend to the relationships between the VA Programs and those of Creative Writing, Fashion Design, Graphic and Digital Design, Media and Communication Studies and Theatre.

Action: This has started and changes have been submitted to the VA Curriculum Committee. Courses have been eliminated, prerequisites examined and stronger links suggested between the various VA programs. Upon recent completion of the recommended visioning exercise, the VA Department has now scheduled a set of curriculum mapping exercises to occur at AH/VAPC meetings this Winter '16 term.

Recommendation: Create venues for curricular discussion that involve all pertinent studio personnel, so there is a commonly held set of assumptions about how the curriculum is designed.

Action: The department will include technicians in curriculum discussions and mentor sessional faculty to ensure consistency in curriculum. A studio technician will join VAPC as a voting member and terms of reference will be revised to reflect new membership.

Recommendation: Develop clear curricular links and sequencing between Foundation courses and both Art Studio and Art History courses. Examine prerequisite structure.

Action: This has started. It will be coordinated by VAPC and Area Coordinators.

Recommendation: Develop clear curricular links between Art History, Theory and Studio courses within the various program offerings. Increase emphasis on value of Visual Art as a material practice that is recognized as contributing to knowledge production within the academy.

Action: This has started. It will be coordinated by VAPC and Area Coordinators.

Recommendation: Develop clear curricular links within the elements of the capstone year. Restructure the teaching load for Senior Studio courses to encompass three faculty per semester, all of whom serve on the student advisory panels.

Action: Revision of capstone year curriculum has started. Regarding workload implications, the department is examining the possibility of a digital rather than print catalogue, as well as the practical and educational benefits and implications of the fundraising component of the graduating year. The PRC noted the need for annual funding to cover material and installation costs in order to stabilize this part of the program. The Dean has appealed to the senior executive committee for funding to support the end of year graduation shows.

Recommendation: Consider eliminating courses still on the books but no longer offered.

Action: This has started.

Recommendation: Consider eliminating the Directed Study courses in Art Studio and replace with the option of repeating a Senior Studio course. This would benefit the program in several ways and would eliminate the highly irregular practice of paying stipends directly to faculty for taking on Independent Studies students.

Action: The department feels that there are advantages to keeping these courses as they provide a unique learning opportunity for students. Five years of data on Directed Studies will be analyzed by the VAPC.

Recommendation: Promote project based learning as a key aspect of VA Teaching and Learning. VA critique and reflection methodology are internationally recognized (and should be acknowledged) as a highly successful Teaching and Learning practice.

Action: This will be undertaken via the VA Strategic Planning Committee and via rotating faculty involvement in institutional events (PD days, micro-lectures, Teaching and Learning workshops, etc.).

Recommendation: Consider separating Drawing from Painting in recognition of Drawing as a distinct material discipline that informs all other studio areas.

Action: The department has developed two new courses *Drawing II* and *Figure Drawing*.

Recommendation: Consider reducing the number of levels in each of the Art Studio areas from four to three to open up space within the current structure for a Drawing area. This would free up two courses that could then expand the Senior Studio instruction and be assigned to a team of three faculty.

Action: The department sees the benefit of retaining a four-term breadth in each major area to ensure sufficient development of student skills and knowledge. However, it will explore flexible curriculum choices for students, less cumbersome program paths and the development of special topics courses to achieve greater interdisciplinary benefits.

Recommendation: Consider introducing analogue, digital and mobile processes into all Photography courses. The area's reliance on traditional chemical practices in photography makes the current curriculum vulnerable to threats of obsolescence.

Action: Digital photography classes (VA 180/280) will be considered as entry points to upper-level darkroom photography (VA 383/384) with these being less analogue-specific in technique. VA has made changes to all the film photo courses to address the Program Review's report about introducing digital processes.

Recommendation: Consider the relationship between video, new media, digital photography and film photography by establishing coherent streams through the program and eliminating course redundancies.

Action: The department agrees and has started this as part of larger program revisions.

Recommendation: Develop strategies for staffing of the Student Gallery through work study programs or student mentorship programs built into the senior capstone year.

Action: The department is investigating the best options for this, including the possibility of a CCR position, an AH directed studies course, a practicum course and/or a work study student position. The VA Department has developed a CCR position for the Student Gallery: a Docent position in the gallery, certified through the Co-Curricular Record. This is available for 2-4 students per term.

C. Recommendations regarding Art History Curriculum, Structure and Delivery

Recommendation: Establish greater formality of curriculum meetings:

Action: AH faculty agree and has appointed a rotating AH coordinator to facilitate this. The feeling is that the AH coordinator should also be the representative of AH on the BFAPC.

Recommendation: Centralize Art History teaching at the Abbotsford campus.

Action: This was not seen as relevant, as only one AH course is taught annually on the Mission campus, which is primarily a service course for GDD. However, the department supports a consolidation of BFA disciplines into a "Creative Hub" on the Abbotsford campus, which would contribute to creating a greatly enhanced experience for the university community on the Abbotsford campus.

Recommendation: Form a standing committee of representatives from AH, Film and MACS to identify collaboration opportunities.

Action: This will be facilitated via BFAPC representatives in conjunction with other interested faculty members from these areas.

Recommendation: Investigate how to consolidate the extended minor and minor into a single minor with requirements in line with major institutions across the country.

Action: Until AH either has its own major or becomes part of a Visual Studies major, it would like to postpone this decision; a number of students are interested in pursuing AH at the graduate level and the current AH extended minor has facilitated this access, whereas the AH minor alone would not.

Recommendation: Investigate how to broaden the art history curriculum culturally and thematically at upper levels within the UFV context. Consider an introductory art history course that is more global in orientation, with regionally specific courses offered in subsequent levels.

Action: The department agrees but disagrees with replacing AH102 with AH100. Instead, it will replace AH100 Art and Culture in a Global Context with a cross-cultural AH1XX course in Visual Literacy, which may become a foundational course for all BFA disciplines, as well as being mandatory for VA major and diploma students (as suggested by the PRC). A 200-level “non-Western” course that is regionally-specific will be delivered as well as AH320 Art and Culture: Special Topics. The department will rotate AH320 more frequently to accommodate greater cultural breadth in the upper-level course offerings.

Recommendation: Standardize credits across lower level and upper level courses, with three credits being the norm. This would help align the program with other institutions and would create additional room for diversifying course offerings.

Action: The department will investigate changing upper-level courses from four to three credits.

Recommendation: Consider moving one or both of the seminar courses down to the third year so that students have more opportunity to incorporate theory and critical reflection into their studio practice.

Action: AH faculty agrees that making AH 200 a required course will better prepare them for AH 401. AH401 will be moved to the AH 300-level and will be revised to be more AH-specific for the benefit of AH students and proposed Visual Studies major students, as well as being mandatory for all VA Majors and a pre-requisite for the capstone courses. AH 401 will be replaced with a second VA senior seminar course to align critical studies more closely with VA major students’ own practices and cultural production in their graduating year. AH 200 will become mandatory for all VA majors and revised to allow for the critique of studio practice for VA students enrolled in the course.

Recommendation: Consider eliminating art history courses that are no longer offered so students’ expectations remain realistic. Review course descriptions to ensure the geographies and cultures being addressed are made more explicit and more uniform.

Actions: The department will remove AH 210 Art Practices and Popular Culture II and AH 267 Signs and Meaning: An Introduction to Semiotics (which will remain as ENGL 267 and MACS 267). It will examine the rotation of 200-level courses to ensure that offerings are varied enough to allow students to achieve their lower-level credits within a reasonable timeframe. Course descriptions are regularly reviewed, and will be closely examined.

Recommendation: Explore the possibility and desirability of different pedagogical models for course delivery, such as larger class sizes in some areas (ie. AH 100’s).

Action: The department does not believe that this is practical for AH at the current time as 100-level numbers are not strong enough to support increased class sizes. AH classes are considered “difficult” writing-intensive courses that benefit from smaller class sizes. The department will explore the option of larger class sizes for Film 100-levels, as this is an area of potential growth that is already

offered in a lecture theatre setting. If undertaken, any move to increase class sizes would entail adequate provision for either hiring markers or compensating faculty for an increased marking load.

D. Recommendation regarding Engaging Indigenous Cultures in Curriculum

Recommendation: Consider more broadly the role of indigenous art practices, knowledge and communities within the Art Studio courses as the department reimagines the Indigenous Arts Certificate with the participation of the Stó:lo people.

Action: Studio faculty will explore ways of Indigenizing studio programming (including possible studio visits off campus, visiting artists in studio classes on campus, etc.); VAPC will continue to work on revising the IAC in consultation with the Indigenous Studies Curriculum Committee, the Indigenization Committee of Senate, and the Stó:lo community.

E. Recommendations regarding Facilities

Recommendation: Consider a comprehensive review of current facilities and their function, and how they serve the needs of studio curriculum at all levels.

Action: Studio techs will undertake a comprehensive review in consultation with faculty at the end of the semester after working with the new spaces; this will include consideration of better working spaces for Senior Studio students and greater utilization of outdoor spaces, as recommended in the PRC report.

Recommendation: Consider dedicating the new 'lighting studio' to a Drawing area.

Action: The department disagrees as the room will have multiple purposes as a clean, finishing space required for multimedia work (not just lighting). There are, however, issues with the space because of acoustics that may need to be resolved for the room to function properly.

Recommendation: Create a system of student storage units and/or lockers outside of teaching spaces.

Action: This will be considered as part of a comprehensive review of current facilities.

Recommendation: Consider the creation of a "Student Lounge" using a currently underutilized "Faculty and Staff Lounge" in order to foster an increased sense of community among the student body, and to support initiatives by the Visual Arts Student Association (VASA).

Action: The department agrees as this is a space that VA and VASA have been petitioning administration for over a number of years. The creation of a space for student use, in addition to building community, will also facilitate better and increased use of studio spaces.

Recommendation: Upgrade the digital projector in the Art History classroom.

Action: The Department Head can submit this as a capital request.

F. VA Department Support Staff

Recommendation: Undertake a Technical Support and Technician audit that considers the number of Studio Technicians, the distribution of assignments in support of the VA Programs, and the fulfillment of Health and Safety protocols and WHMIS training for all students.

Action: The department will undertake this audit; it will write out all current duties and responsibilities and compare with current job descriptions. The head will work with the Manager of Academic and Administrative Services on this task. The issue of Mac support continues to be a major problem at UFV. ITS does not provide support, which places an extra burden on VA's digital/2D technician. The department will continue to motivate for Mac support, which should include:

- Having the Mac Lab computers and printers connected to the ITS Windows Printer server so students can be charged for their printing with their campus card (eliminating the need for technicians to manage printing accounts).
- Allowing instructors and students to connect to the VA Mac File Server from off campus.
- Putting the Mac Lab machines on the ITS refresh cycle (current machines are leased or three years).

Recommendation: Increase Department Assistant position to a 100% position dedicated to the Visual Arts Department in Abbotsford.

Action: The department agrees as some tasks go ignored. The VA department assistant's contract has since changed and the Dean will look into the effect on the department.

Recommendation: The BFA Educational Advisor should continue to be housed within the VA Department area in recognition of the importance of that role in ongoing VA student retention and community building, which can be especially difficult within a commuter university.

Action: The BFA Advisor is now spending two days a week of her 50% contract in the VA department and the rest of her advising time in the Advising division in the new SUB.

G. Recommendations regarding Faculty Workload (Teaching, Research and Service)

Recommendation: Faculty should work with their Dean and the Evaluation Committee to clarify the role and expectations for faculty research within UFV as a "special purpose, teaching university."

Action: The department agrees and has generated a draft document that defines VA-specific research, which will be circulated to the Dean's Office once finalized. The department will invite members of the UFV Research Office to VA department meetings to discuss VA research and its promotion.

Recommendation: Review the practice of maintaining part time Faculty positions (less than 7/7) with a view to establishing greater equity and sustainability among the ranks.

Action: All faculty who are currently less than 7/7, with the exception of one 5/7 faculty, would prefer to keep their current status. VA has a workloads committee that has generated a more equitable system of assigning duties but everyone in the department does more than their fair share

in order to keep the department functioning. If UFV is successful in introducing flexible workload, these issues can be addressed through balancing teaching, service and scholarship. The viability of increasing the 5/7 to a more substantial contract will be weighed in relation to student demand for AH classes.

Recommendation: Sessional instructors should receive appropriate mentorship and orientation.

Action: Area coordinators, the department head, and department assistant will coordinate sessional mentoring and orientation but, more importantly, the head needs to alert sessional faculty to the institutional orientations organized by HR.

H. Recommendations regarding Student Experience and Success

Recommendation: The VA Department should work more closely with the Career Centre to increase VA student participation in the UFV Coop program. This would help raise community awareness of the VA program and add to employability for students.

Action: Although past efforts to establish Co-op positions were unsuccessful because appropriate placements were not found, the department would like to pursue this in conjunction with the Career Centre, perhaps extending the search into Vancouver. The department was proactive this past year, establishing three CCR positions via a Memorandum of Understanding with The Reach Gallery and Museum. The Department Head will liaise with the Career Centre and The Reach.

Recommendation: Develop a Student Art Placement Policy in partnership with other interest groups on campus that would enable the display of student work in key locations across campus.

Action: Procedures already exist via Facilities and the department works with these. The department will reinstate a revised VA Student Handbook and include this in all classes so that students are aware that it is possible to exhibit work on campus. The department head will approach the library about exhibition space.

Recommendation: The VA Department should work towards formalizing an ongoing relationship with The Reach Gallery, both as an exhibition opportunity for faculty and alumnae, but also as a “work study” opportunity for current students.

Action: The department has had an active relationship with The Reach for some time including: a previous Director of The Reach having been an Adjunct Faculty member; an MOU that allowed VA to establish three CCR positions; two UFV student representatives nominated to become Board Members of the Reach; a number of VA students having gained paid and volunteer employment at The Reach, as well as curating and exhibiting there. Discussions are underway with the current Director to establish the sharing of visiting artists, and to create more opportunities for students and faculty. The outgoing VA Department Head and Sculpture Faculty served as members of a steering committee for CreatiValley, an annual creative arts festival, which showcases UFV BFA student and faculty work. The current Director critiqued the work of VA major graduates in 2015, and addressed graduates at the opening of the BFA grad show. The VA Department Head is pursuing the appointment of an Adjunct Faculty member from The Reach. The department will change the terms of reference for the VA Visiting Artist committee chair to include acting as liaison between VA and

The Reach. The department will also continue to promote Reach events, CCR positions, and the Emerge program for young artists.

PART TWO: Visual Arts Self-Study Recommendations and Planned Actions

A. VA Programs

Finalize individual sets of program learning outcomes for all programs and publicize this to target and recruit from different demographics of students, while keeping programs interlocked to permit simple laddering options.

Revise VA major learning outcomes to reflect institutional format and to clarify language, meaning, and measurable qualities. This will be done in conjunction with the development of learning outcomes for the other VA programs. Research ability needs to be addressed specifically in the outcomes.

Undertake a detailed curriculum mapping exercise to ensure that program outcomes are being met through the combination of program courses, and to determine where there may be any gaps or excesses in delivering outcomes, and whether certain outcomes could be delivered more effectively and/or efficiently.

Improve areas of deficiency. Ensure that core workplace and practical skills, such as writing, oral communication, teamwork, and information technology are embedded more overtly in the curriculum.

Investigate the need to create a foundation option combining multiple computer based art productions, instead of an either video or digital photography option.

Decide on a methodology for providing more intermediate and advanced drawing courses. This may entail a split of the existing shared studio stream of "Drawing & Painting".

Explore special topics offerings in studio arts.

Integrate more course content that requires students to showcase their work on the internet.

Explore expanding VA360 Professional Development and Practices into a two-semester offering to incorporate this content, or require a CIS, GDD or portfolio component for VA majors. Explore requiring VA 360 for VA diploma students as well.

Monitor implementation of the portfolio review between the 30-60 credit mark to ensure that this is leading to an enhancement of the upper levels and specifically the capstone experience. This should permit better enrollment management.

Continue to facilitate opportunities for students from outside the BFA to access VA and AH classes and investigate program pathways with Sciences.

Revise or replace the Indigenous Arts Certificate with a more flexible, multi-disciplinary certificate in Indigenous Arts. A credential designation of higher value than a certificate might be needed for an initiative of this importance. Consider alternate alignment and laddering paths to larger programs.

Decrease lower-level requirements to 18 credits in the AH extended minor in both the BA and BFA. This will facilitate students moving through the program more efficiently at the lower-level; increasing the upper-level requirements in lieu of this will provide more breadth at the upper level and help distinguish the extended minor from the minor.

Remove seat reserves from the 100 level Art History courses and investigate the drop in lower level fill rates in Art.

Pursue the introduction of a Visual Studies or Art History major as the number of students interested in post-graduate education in Art History has increased. New surveys should be conducted as part of the process of investigating the viability of a major. Possibly expand Art History into developing and implementing curatorial studies.

Investigate increasing the number of courses offered online (currently, only AH101 and AH102 are offered online).

B. BFA Program Committee

Work with other disciplines to encourage the development of another major in the BFA to facilitate more interdisciplinary connections. Theatre currently has a major in the BA, and thus might be a good initial option to adapt to the BFA.

Investigate possibility of interdisciplinary foundations courses that would introduce students to the various disciplines of the BFA, and to one another to build a stronger sense of community.

C. Department Head

Be more proactive in engaging the Community Arts Advisory Committee.

Complete the transfer of spaces between rooms C1001 and C1402d, and provide the Visual Arts Student Association a physical room to house their offices and resource centre in C1001.

Continue to explore means of operating technical studios on weekend hours (Saturdays).

Work more closely with schools to ensure VA programs respond to student needs and demands, and use these connections to help recruit students.

Encourage mentoring of new and sessional faculty and consider an open door policy amongst faculty to learn from one another. Consider ways of promoting pedagogical exchange amongst faculty in the department.

Continue to pursue and promote international partnerships and exchanges to provide study abroad opportunities for students and PD opportunities for our faculty and staff.

Work more closely with UFV Study Abroad personnel to vet study abroad Visual Arts placements and ensure integrity of the experience for our students, and to compile data on the placements of Art History students abroad to monitor and try to ensure the future quality of their experiences.

D. Strategic Planning Committee

Develop, with institutional support, a more robust recruitment and marketing strategy aimed at raising our profile in the community. While applications, enrolments and retention rates are healthy, the department and its students would benefit from a greater “brand” identity in the Fraser Valley and beyond. A specific VA marketing identity would enhance the appeal and profile of the program.

Ensure that students are alerted to a variety of career paths throughout their degree; while this is explicitly addressed in VA360 Professional Development and Practices, alumni in the work force might be engaged to host panels and act as contacts; more career and or post-graduate information could be made available via our website and/or in print form.

Review the promotional strategy for the Extended Studies Certificate in Visual Arts.

E. Visiting Artists Committee

In addition to bringing in visiting artists as speakers, department events should also feature representatives of the variety of arts-related professions that employ fine arts graduates.

F. Department Assistant

Track our graduates more systematically to determine career paths and identify further educational goals.

G. Studio Technicians

Plan the next stage of renovations around improving senior studio physical spaces. Continue to track capstone numbers to mitigate unnecessary constraints on senior studios.