

Implementation Plan

1. Cover memo

Department of Design and Computation Arts Year of appraisal 2016

To: Dr. Cathy Bolton, Vice-Provost, Teaching and Learning
From: Dr. Rebecca Duclos, Faculty Dean
Faculty of: Faculty of Fine Arts
Date: November 25, 2016

Please find enclosed the finalized Implementation Plan for the Department cited above as part of the academic program appraisals process. This Plan was duly discussed with:

- The Department Chair
- The Dean of Graduate Studies (if applicable)

As mentioned in the Concordia University Academic Program Appraisals Manual, 5th edition revised, the Faculty and Department will follow-up on this Plan in two years, when prompted by your office.

Sincerely,

Faculty Dean's name Dr. Rebecca Duclos

Faculty Dean's signature 

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2. Summary

Concordia's Department of Design and Computation Arts addresses design and visual communication in a holistic, experimental, collaborative and sustainable way. It offers the following undergraduate programs:

- Major in Design (72 credits)
- Specialization in Computation Arts (60 credits)
- Major in Computation Arts with Computer Applications (45 credits)
- Minor in Computation Arts (24 credits)
- Minor in Game Design (24 credits)

The largest and most significant ones are the BFA Major in Design and the BFA Specialization in Computation Arts. Both offer competitive technical, artistic and conceptual studies in their respective fields. The Design program focuses on visual communications, interaction design and the built environment, while Computation Arts explores the various creative practices founded on the use of computational media. Both programs share an ethos of multi-disciplinarity and critical thinking and aim to establish a strong intellectual foundation and the means to adapt to changing technical, artistic and commercial landscapes. The Major in Design, in particular, addresses overarching principles of sociocultural and environmental sustainability.

At the graduate level, the department recently introduced the Master's in Design. The Master's in Design trains students in three spheres of design: visual communication – the use of signs, icons, and visual symbols to convey information; the built environment – the structures, landscapes, and spaces in relation to the activities that take place in them; and interaction design – the behavior of an object or system in relation to its users or participants. These spheres are integrated throughout the program, and connections between them are identified and synthesized.

The department has received unanimous praise for the high quality of labs and facilities, and the expertise of the technical staff available to students. The Sensor Lab provides facilities to Design and Computation Arts students working on class-related projects that involve analogue electronics, microcontroller programming, and simple textile construction and also offers support to faculty members teaching classes in the areas of tangible media, physical computing, wearables, responsive environments, and other areas that involve embedded electronics or textiles. Its expansion is viewed as necessary and extremely positive.

Faculty members pursue ambitious and successful state-of-the-art research in numerous fields encompassing a combination of scholarly and creative practices in design and digital art and media including: food studies, Irish studies; interaction design; electronic textiles and functional fiber manufacturing; human-computer interaction, tangible media, and physical computing; eco-design, environmental and social Life Cycle Analysis and Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design.

The department is entering an exciting period of growth, curricular innovation, and cross-faculty research and teaching collaboration. Members of the decanal team met to consider the strengths and concerns outlined in the DAC's report and to offer, in the table below, suggestions for change and improvements where necessary. In particular, they noted the necessity to address the varying levels of technical expertise of students admitted to the programs. The department could consider emphasizing pre-entry, personalized advising and they further recommended a summer "bootcamp" where incoming students can acquire some of the foundational skills needed to begin the program in the fall. While noting that important curriculum updating work is currently in progress, they would also like the department to review and redefine the core identities of the Design and Computation Arts undergraduate programs, including the language for descriptions of programs, recruitment materials, and course descriptions in the calendar in order to better reflect the broad interdisciplinary approach to design combined with critical thinking that is the core strength of the department.

In addition to consideration of program identity, the department is encouraged to consider the optimum size of its programs and to set targets for growth, if growth seems feasible and desired. It is clear there is widespread interest in the department's course offerings and research expertise. New offerings, such as expansion into the area of design and health and conversion of the Minor in Game Design into a Major, have been discussed. How can the department maintain its level of student mentorship, community engagement, and excellent reputation while expanding into these new areas and admitting students from across multiple departments? What, ultimately, is the optimal size for the department as it considers growing program offerings and broadening its cross-disciplinary areas of faculty research?

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3. Recommendations

The Faculty Dean is invited to include a numbered list of recommendations for improvement, as well as a rationale and implementation schedule (an Excel spreadsheet is also available by request to the Appraisal Coordinator).

Recommendations	Prioritized timeline for completion	Responsibility	Dean's comments and resource implications
<p>1. The department is encouraged to hold department-wide meetings to review and redefine the core identities of the Design and Computation Arts undergraduate programs, including the language for descriptions of programs, recruitment materials, and course descriptions in the calendar. Are separate areas of Design and Computation Arts still an effective division, given the department's multi-disciplinary emphasis? Might there be another way to consolidate the curriculum and establish pathways for students? These discussions will be best achieved in a follow-up departmental retreat, as the UAC suggests, and should emphasize that the work of program stewardship, while reflective of student, staff, and part-time faculty concerns, needs to be taken up by the full complement of full-time faculty.</p>	<p>Fall, 2016-Winter, 2017, for the 2017-18 curriculum process.</p>	<p>All tenured and tenure-track faculty; Departmental Curriculum Committee</p>	<p>The office of the Vice-Provost, Teaching & Learning may still have funding for departmental retreats.</p>

<p>Rationale: Recent departmental hiring, shifting areas in research, and rapid evolution in all fields in the arts require that the department reframe the language describing its core strengths and program identities.</p> <p>2. The department is right to identify the varying levels of foundational technical skills possessed by incoming students as an issue in need of attention. Faculty should consider a way to add pre-entry advising of accepted students to determine their level of skill and gaps in technical knowledge. The department should then consider requiring a summer or early fall intensive course or non-credit training module for students in need of those foundational skills, particularly for first-year Computation Art students.</p>	<p>Summer 2017</p>	<p>All full-time faculty; Curriculum Committee; Associate Dean, Planning/Facilities; Associate Dean, Academic Affairs</p>	<p>Potential for additional course credit for summer intensive, if needed.</p>
<p>Rationale: The department has identified the varying levels of technical skill on the part of incoming students as both a strength and a challenge: a strength, because it affirms that diversity of approaches to design, reflecting the department's philosophy and multidisciplinary approach; and, a challenge, in that students may find themselves in courses for which they are not yet technically prepared.</p>	<p>Fall/ Winter 2016-17</p>	<p>Dept. chair & Faculty Dean; Dept. Search Committee</p>	
<p>3. The department will embark on a search for a new hire in the area of Visual Communication in fall 2016 and is encouraged to consider candidates with additional expertise in the field of Design History/Studies for this hire, in support of the DAC's concern.</p>			

<p>Rationale: To better incorporate critical studies and thinking across the curriculum, and to blur the perceived distinction between critical thinking and vocational training.</p> <p>4. The department is encouraged to determine and implement increased opportunities for lateral curriculum exchange, whether across programs within the department or across departments within Fine Arts. The department should implement the Departmental Appraisal Committee and External Evaluators' recommendations by establishing a list of relevant external courses and overlapping areas of interest, whereby cross-listing, reciprocal access, or other arrangements to share classes, expertise, and shop/lab space might be facilitated across departments. The same is recommended for exchange and sharing of courses across the department's programs.</p>	<p>Summer/Fall 2017</p>	<p>Dept. Chair; Program heads; Departmental Curriculum Committee</p>	
<p>Rationale: The department has identified a need for more lightweight, sustainable mechanisms to broaden the content of program curricula.</p> <p>5. In conjunction with the above recommendations, the department is encouraged to review the department's pedagogical philosophy and methodology. Alternative models of course delivery or coverage of skills or topics, such as online or blended learning, should be considered alongside the question of the right size for each of its programs.</p>	<p>Fall, 2016- Summer, 2017</p>	<p>Full-time Faculty; Curriculum Committee</p>	

<p>Rationale: The goal is to balance the teaching of technical skills and conceptual approaches, and to determine how to meet increasing demand for courses and programs.</p> <p>6. Following the completion of the first cohort of the Masters in Design program, the department should undertake a review of its curriculum successes and areas identified for improvement. A limited review should take place at the end of the first year, with a more in-depth review of the curriculum taking place at the end of year two.</p>	<p>Spring 2017 and Spring 2018</p>	<p>GPD; full-time faculty; students; technical support staff</p>	
<p>Rationale: Since the MDes. is a new graduate program, and since new curriculum experiments have been initiated in its first year, it would be useful to review the program's launch with all faculty and students involved.</p>			
<p>7. The department is encouraged to consult with the office of the Associate Dean, Planning & Facilities, to see if it would be possible to extend the hours of certain labs or workspaces without staff supervision. Can upper level undergrads and/or Masters students be given swipe card access to labs in order to maximize use without requiring additional staff hours?</p>	<p>Fall/Winter 2016-17</p>	<p>Chair; GPD; Associate Dean, Facilities and Planning</p>	
<p>Rationale: External Evaluators noted that work spaces are perceived to be at capacity, and that increased use may be expected with the launch of the MDes. Program.</p>			

<p>8. The department is encouraged to open new channels of communication between Full- and Part-time Faculty on curricular and extra-curricular topics.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>All-Faculty</p>	
<p>Rationale: The department should explore formal and informal ways to incorporate the collective expertise and knowledge of Part-Time faculty, as the curriculum and program directions evolve.</p>			