



Theatre Studies
Final Assessment Report &
Implementation Plan

Faculty / Affiliated University College	Faculty of Arts and Humanities
Degrees Offered	BA
Modules Reviewed	Major in Theatre Studies
External Reviewers	<p>Dr. Jenn Stephenson Associate Dean, Faculty of Arts and Science Queen’s University</p> <p>Dr. Barry Freeman Chair, Department of Arts, Culture & Media University of Toronto Scarborough</p>
Internal Reviewer	Dr. Andrew Johnson Associate Dean (Undergraduate), Faculty of Health Sciences (member of SUPR-U committee)
Date of Site Visit	Feb 3-4, 2022
Evaluation	Good Quality
Approval Dates	<p>SUPR-U: May 18, 2022 SCAPA: May 25, 2022 Senate (for information only): June 10, 2022</p>
Year of Next Review	Year of next cyclical review: 2029-2030

Overview of Western’s Cyclical Review Assessment Reporting Process

In accordance with Western’s Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), the Final Assessment Report (FAR) provides a summary of the cyclical review, internal responses and assessment and evaluation of the undergraduate modules delivered by the Theatre Studies Program at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities.

This FAR considers the following documents:

- the program’s self-study brief;
- the external reviewers’ report;
- the response from the program; and
- the response from the Dean’s Office.

The FAR identifies the strengths of the program, opportunities for program enhancement and improvement, and details the recommendations of the external reviewers – noting those recommendations to be prioritized for implementation.

The Implementation Plan details the recommendations from the FAR that are selected for implementation, identifies who is responsible for approving and acting on the recommendations, specifies any action or follow-up that is required, and defines the timeline for completion.

The FAR (including Implementation Plan) is sent for approval through SUPR-U and SCAPA, then for information to Senate and to the Ontario Universities’ Council on Quality Assurance. Subsequently, it is publicly accessible on Western’s IQAP website. The FAR is the only document resulting from the undergraduate cyclical review process that is made public; all other documents are confidential to the Program/Department/Faculty and SUPR-U.

Executive Summary

Western’s Theatre Studies program, an interdisciplinary program housed in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, was developed in 2013-14 by a group of faculty members committed to honouring the legacy of the Drama Workshop (a previous iteration of Theatre at Western). Contributing faculty at the developmental stage came from English Studies, French Studies, Modern Languages, and Classical Studies, with input from others in Visual Arts and Philosophy. Offering a Major (6.0 credits), a Minor (4.0 credits), and a Certificate (3.5 credits), Theatre Studies is a second-year entry program.

Module enrolments have increased from the first official cohort, from 5 (3 minors, 2 majors) in 2014-15 to 28 (10 majors, 18 minors) in 2020-21. The number of students taking Theatre Studies courses has also increased from 45 students in 2015-16 to a high of 122 in 2019-20.

To inform the self-study for this program review, input was collected from students via a dedicated survey and focus groups with undergraduate students. A survey and interviews equally took place with recent alumni with the support of a graduate research assistant. In 2020, the program reviewed existing program outcomes and mapped these across the curriculum as well as assessment and instructional practices across courses.

The external reviewers shared a positive assessment of the Theatre Studies program, indicating that given the fiscal, physical and human constraints, faculty members “*have done a lot with little, this in a wider field of practice and education that often positions 'resourcefulness' as a pedagogical virtue.*” The reviewers offer constructive considerations for program enhancement and conclude their report with five recommendations.

Strengths and Innovative Features Identified by the Program

- Theatre Studies students enjoy one of the most interdisciplinary experiences in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities.
 - o The program is intentionally nimble and actively encourages students to pursue double majors or major-minor combinations that will allow them to widen the scope of their undergraduate education.
- The program offers a 0.5 or 1.0 internship credit at arts organizations on campus (e.g., Theatre Western), in the community (e.g., the Grand Theatre or TAP Centre for Creativity) or beyond (e.g., the Stratford Festival).
- The Destination Theatre, a study abroad class, is open to students both in Theatre Studies streams and from around the university.
- The Fall Production and Summer Shakespeare are collaborative faculty-student endeavors, and frequently draw participants from across the Faculty of Arts and Humanities and the wider campus community.
- A strong range of assessments and pedagogical methods from written/research work to performance/practice-based work.
- Strengths listed by current and recent students include:
 - o Nearly all courses focus on experiential learning
 - o Engaging flipped classroom teaching techniques, small-group work and in-class analysis activities
 - o Strong sense of community created by the small cohort

Concerns and Areas of Improvement Identified by the Program

- Reliance on the teaching support of only a handful of professors based in English and Writing Studies.
- Limited number of courses in which students can develop proficiency in community- engaged contexts and professional development.

- Experiential Learning (EL) and Community Engaged Learning (CEL) components that may not be accessible to all students (for reasons of time/availability, and/or cost).
- Small number and variety of courses in Theatre Studies can be a barrier to timely program completion.
- Students shared an interest for more opportunities for performance and more instruction in theatre production skills as part of the curriculum.
- Need for a modular room to rehearse and perform – not only for students, but also for guest speakers and workshop leaders.

Review Process

The review committee (comprised of the two external reviewers and one internal reviewer) was provided with Volumes I and II in advance of their visit and then (due to pandemic restrictions) met virtually with the following over the course of the two days.

- Acting Vice-Provost of Academic Programs
- Director of Academic Quality and Enhancement
- Vice-Provost (Academic Planning, Policy and Faculty)
- Dean of the Faculty
- Associate Academic Dean of the Faculty
- Chair of the English and Writing Studies Department
- Current and Past Program Directors
- Research and Instructional Librarian
- Undergraduate and Outreach Coordinator
- Program Faculty
- Program Students

Following the formal review, the external reviewers submitted a comprehensive report of their findings which was sent to the Program and Faculty Dean for review and response. Formative documents, including Volumes I and II of the Self-Study, the External Report, and the Program and Decanal responses form the basis of this final assessment report of the Theatre Studies program.

Summative Assessment – External Reviewers’ Report

The external reviewers’ shared the following remarks as part of their review summary: *“The quality of the program has been excellent on the strength of an outstanding faculty complement who have been winning teaching awards and doing research, even, about innovative pedagogy in the field. Nearly a decade after its introduction, student satisfaction is very high, with students reporting great learning experiences in their courses, a great ability to connect with their professors and special experiential opportunities. The program is a gem.”*

Strengths of the Program

- Faculty members can boast a record of innovative collaborations, and ongoing community-engaged and study abroad experiences that students report are transformative.
- The program leverages close ties to the London and Stratford performing arts communities to situate EL and CEL courses in these rich local contexts.
 - o *“This is a hallmark of the program and quite substantial in both quality and quantity in relation to other theatre programs.”* (p.9)
- The program actions the University’s commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous communities and the goal of creating a more equitable and inclusive university. For example, the core offerings of the program include both a course in Indigenous Theatre and Performance (Theatre 3209) and a Shakespeare course that destabilizes European paradigms, confronting one of Western cultures most-revered cultural icons (Remediated Shakespeare Theatre 3327). Classes equally provide a strong exposure to critical discussions of class, race and sexuality.
- Smart and efficacious curriculum in which theatre is understood in relation to broader social and political concerns.
- The relatively small class sizes often lead to easier implementation of active learning strategies.
- Many courses embrace the "flipped" classroom model which places priority on meaningful use of co-presence and opportunities for collaborative and embodied learning.

Areas of Concern or Prospective Improvement

- The paucity of course offerings to Theatre Studies major/minor students (or timetable conflicts), often requires registration in “out of program” courses to fulfill degree requirements.
 - o Too much cross-listing (film, visual art, music, classics) can "water down" the experience for students, introducing too many disparate critical frames and methodologies to reconcile.
- Lack of a purpose-built or renovated space for theatre instruction. The current space in UC3220 limits movement and collaborative group work.
- A tradition of “travel” courses can be quite labour-intensive for faculty and staff, and they also present access challenges for certain students.
- Any further investment in community-engaged praxis, or in outreach of any variety, will increase the administrative load, necessitating additional support.
- Overall program and course enrolments numbers are low.

Summary of the Reviewers' Key Recommendations and Program/Faculty Responses

Recommendations requiring implementation have been marked with an asterisk (*)

Reviewers' Recommendations	Program / Faculty Response
<p>1. The development of an annual offering of a "first-year" 1000-level course in Theatre Studies. *</p>	<p>Program: The program welcomes this recommendation and agrees that it might help attract more students. As a provisional plan, the program proposes reorganizing the REQUIRED program as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Move 2201F/G (Understanding Performance) and 2202F/G (Performance Beyond Theatres) into first year. - 2204F/G and 2205F/G (genre courses) remain at the Year 2 level (offered in alternating years). - Redesign 3205F/G (History of Performance Theory) and 4XXX (Contemporary Issues in Performance Theory) as Year 2 courses and require students to take ONE of them. <p>These courses are already among the program's regular offerings so this proposed program redesign will not involve new staffing needs for a Year 1 course.</p>
<p>2. Consider the use of some number of adjunct ("limited duties") instructors as part of the instructional cohort. *</p>	<p>Program: The program agrees with this suggestion. The department currently gets 28 Limited Duty appointments (LDs) from the Dean's Office. The program would welcome the opportunity to liaise with the Department Head to find strategies that might release 0.5 LD per year to Theatre Studies (TS) or even 1.0 LDs over three years.</p> <p>In terms of the larger picture, the new Page/Stage/Screen course (2XXXF/G), which will be taught by a faculty member from another program within the department and cross-listed as a Theatre Studies course will help to diversify course offerings. In that spirit, the program seeks opportunities to collaborate more robustly and creatively with the other programs within the department to see if there are opportunities to run LD courses that could benefit multiple programs.</p> <p>Faculty: LDs are assigned to Departments as numbers warrant, and then allocated according to the Department's internal decision procedures. The Program response contains some great ideas about maximizing these scarce resources through collaboration with other programs, such as cross-listing playwrighting with Writing Studies and contributing a course to the Page, Stage, Screen program.</p>
<p>3. Provide a single, flexible, permeable "lab" space that better enables the kind of dynamic performance and community-engaged pedagogy</p>	<p>Program: Creating this kind of modular lab space on campus has been a high priority for TS. The program welcome's the reviewers' emphasis that the availability and use of a flexible rehearsal and performance space would be beneficial. There is equal agreement that this space could be created on a modest budget. The room in the UC basement, for example, that is currently turned over to storing furniture (UC1105), could easily be converted as a rehearsal space and small studio theatre and be fitted out for a few thousand dollars.</p>

<p>that is the program's strengths. *</p>	<p>With respect to the upcoming renovation of a space at 450 Talbot, the Faculty of Information and Media Studies have expressed willingness to collaborate with TS to see if there are opportunities there for a functional interdisciplinary lab that might be shared.</p> <p>Faculty: The Faculty is working with the Faculty of Information and Media Studies (FIMS) to develop flexible performance space at 450 Talbot.</p>
<p>4. Embed Theatre Studies more strongly in the mandate and stewardship of the Department of English and Creative Writing. *</p>	<p>Program: The program is in agreement and suggests acting on the reviewers' recommendation by encouraging the Department to take the opportunity to reflect on its administrative structure as a whole, not just as it bears on TS. Specifically, the structure and mandate of the undergrad committee (CUS) could be rethought. There are opportunities for this committee to facilitate better collaboration, integration, and nimbleness among the programs now housed under the departmental umbrella. In particular, a restructured CUS could bring the five program directors together for regularly scheduled conversations where they could collaboratively discuss issues and policies that affect the undergraduate experience across the programs. A reconceptualized CUS would support a shift in departmental culture towards acknowledging that this central committee is responsible for holding space for all of the programs.</p> <p>As an extension, the program would equally welcome additional administrative support for EL and CEL coordination. This work is currently being done on an ad hoc basis, and with admin support, as available.</p> <p>Faculty: The Dean's Office agrees that more scheduled discussions among the directors of the five programs could yield fruitful opportunities for collaboration.</p> <p>The program indicates a desire to see more administrative support to coordinate from the Faculty Experiential Learning coordination. The Faculty recognizes that this is a resource-intensive undertaking that requires support to grow and thrive. The Faculty is currently developing the role of an Internships and Experiential Learning Coordinator to support students and programs in developing these kinds of learning opportunities.</p>
<p>5. In support of Recommendation #4, conduct a retreat to better articulate a stronger place for Theatre Studies within the Department. *</p>	<p>Program: The program feels that a visioning exercise in 2022-2023 would be timely, particularly given the planned appointment of a new Dean in 2023. A retreat would permit reflection on how the administrative structure could be better attuned to the needs of the program as well as allow the Department to take stock of current context and determine a vision for future – being proactive rather than reactive as a new administration sets up.</p> <p>Faculty: The Dean's Office agrees with the program's response that, with five distinct programs, the Department would benefit from an in-house review of its structure and mandate with respect to undergraduate studies in relation to all five programs.</p>

Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan provides a summary of the recommendations that require action and/or follow-up. The Program Director, in consultation with the Dean of the Faculty will be responsible for monitoring the Implementation Plan. Recommendations, or components thereof, that have or are already being actioned have not been included in the table below.

Recommendation	Proposed Action and Follow-up	Responsibility	Timeline
<p>Recommendation #1 Consider the development of an annual offering of a "first-year" 1000-level course in Theatre Studies.</p>	<p>Discuss the merits and feasibility of a first-year course offering in TS and determine the viability of the provisional course reorganization plan.</p>	<p>Program Director Program faculty members Department Head</p>	<p>Plan to be determined by December 2022 Prospective change for September 2023 By December 2022</p>
<p>Recommendations #2 Consider the use of some number of adjunct ("limited duties") instructors as part of the instructional cohort.</p>	<p>Determine the possibility of obtaining limited duty appointments to support and diversify course offerings. Discuss additional cross-listed course opportunities.</p>	<p>Program Director Department Head</p>	
<p>Recommendation #3 Determine options for the development and use of a "lab" space that better enables dynamic performance and community-engaged pedagogy.</p>	<p>Investigate the repurposing of UC1105 and the possibility of using the McIntosh Gallery. Support the Faculty in consultations with FIMS about the development of a flexible performance space at 450 Talbot.</p>	<p>Program Director Department Head Dean's Office</p>	<p>By December 2022</p>
<p>Recommendation #4 and #5 Embed Theatre Studies more strongly in the mandate and stewardship of the Department and conduct a retreat to better articulate a stronger place for Theatre Studies within the Department.</p>	<p>Together with the Departmental Head, discuss opportunities to foster further collaboration between departmental programs (e.g. restructuring the CUS committee and determine). Determine a mechanism to review the structure and mandate of the department, with respect to undergraduate studies (e.g. via a planned retreat).</p>	<p>Program Director Department Head</p>	<p>By December 2022</p>