

Faculty / Affiliated University College	Information and Media Studies	
Degrees Offered	Master of Media in Journalism and Communication (MMJC)	
Date of Last Review	2014-2015 (as a new program)	
Approved Fields	None	
External Reviewers	Dr. Asmaa Malik School of Journalism Toronto Metropolitan University	Dr. Alla Kushniryk Department of Communication Studies Mount Saint Vincent University
Internal Reviewers	Dr. Immaculate Namukasa, Associate Dean, Graduate Faculty of Education	Michael Feagan, Ph.D. Candidate History
Date of Site Visit	February 10 & 13, 2023	
Date Review Report Received	March 7, 2023	
Date Program/Faculty Response Received	Program: April 18, 2023 Faculty: April 18, 2023	
Evaluation	Good Quality	
Approval Dates	SUPR-G: June 26, 2023 ACA: September 6, 2023 Senate: September 15, 2023	
Year of Next Review	Year of next cyclical review: 2030-2031	
Progress Report	June 2026	

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 new program review, internal responses, and assessment and evaluation of the Master of Media in Journalism and Communication (MMJC) delivered by the Faculty of Information and Media Studies.

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, Faculty of Information and Media Studies.

This FAR identifies the strengths of the program and 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 have been 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 the Senate Graduate Program Review Committee (SUPR-G) and ACA, 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 from the graduate cyclical review process that is made public; all other documents are confidential to the Master of Media in Journalism and Communication (MMJC) Program, and the Faculty of Information and Media Studies, the School of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies (SGPS), and SUPR-G.

Executive Summary

Stemming from Western University's strong tradition of journalism education, the Master of Media in Journalism and Communication (MMJC) program was launched in September 2015. The only graduate program in Canada that offers a master's degree in both journalism and communications, the MMJC is a one-year professional program that introduces students to a wide array of career opportunities, in written and broadcast journalism, radio and podcast production, content and digital marketing, graphic and website design, corporate communications, and public relations.

The program accepts a maximum of 35 students each year, entering from all academic backgrounds including science, criminology, business, psychology, history and English.

In the winter of 2022, three full-time faculty members formed an IQAP sub-committee and met every week for a couple of months to work on the IQAP self-study. The self-study was informed by the survey of, and facilitation of focus groups with, current students and alumni from classes between 2016-2021. Additionally, a survey was administered among employers who had MMJC interns.

The external reviewers shared a positive assessment of the Master of Media in Journalism and Communication Program. They offer three recommendations for further enhancement.

Summary of Strengths and Innovative Features Identified by the Program

- Limited enrolment allows for small classes and the creation of a tightknit community of students and faculty members.
- The program prepares students to be leaders in their fields through the course structure which incorporates realistic in-class scenarios and projects, students gain practical experience, such as researching, writing and sharing stories in a variety of mediums.
- Temporary stipends were created to help offset costs associated with the often unpaid internship requirement.
- The internship component with a journalism or communications organization within Canada or internationally exposes students to news organizations, marketing and PR agencies, government ministries, health care, NGOs and not-for-profits, financial institutions and other businesses, organizations and corporations – large and small.
- Several courses have significant Workplace Integrated Learning and Community Engaged Learning components; students work with organizations such as Big Brothers, Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre, Youth Opportunities Unlimited, the YMCA, Sledge Hockey of Canada, and the London Devilettes.

- The program has committed to embedding principles of Indigenization and decolonization, equity, diversity, inclusion, accessibility, and antiracism into its design, learning outcomes, and goals by:
 - o developing a curriculum that incorporates the review and analysis of the work of journalists and communicators from underrepresented groups which responds to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action #86.
 - o recruiting two indigenous Faculty members who bring their insights and expertise to a range of EDID-related course offerings.
 - o implementing policies and processes that strengthens embedding of EDID initiatives throughout program, for instance, the call-in/pizza initiative which facilitates difficult discussions and healthy class community.
 - o The FIMS Asper Fellow in Winter 2022 taught a graduate course called "Decolonization, Reciprocity and Healing." It focused on short-form and long-form reporting and storytelling.
 - o Creation of an "EDID at FIMS" web page designed to serve as an information resource about EDID initiatives.
 - o Actively responding to alumni feedback and sending them an annual progress report on EDID initiatives.
 - o Instructors reviewed their curriculum to ensure that course materials such as readings, story examples, and guest speakers are inclusive and representative of the diverse communities that make up Canada.
- MMJC's students have access to excellent production equipment which FIMS' Media Specialist ensures is always kept up to industry standards; alumni and students have expressed high levels of satisfaction with this equipment and space.
- Students will benefit from additional experiential learning opportunities from the University's acquisition of a building in downtown London which aims to offer services to the community.

Summary of Concerns and Areas of Improvement Identified by the Program

- A long-term solution for the provision of funding to students on the 10-week unpaid internship.
- Modifying the structure of the final semester to ensure that there is an effective conclusion to the program and more support with the internship set-up process.
- There is a greater program emphasis on journalism than in communications, with a greater number of student awards tied to the former.
- Improving the diversity of the student population may require the program to introduce new approaches to recruitment and to the admissions process.
- Students expressed the desire for more elective courses.
- A need to revisit the content of the "Law course".

Review Process

As part of the external review, the review committee, comprising two external reviewers, one internal reviewer and a graduate student reviewer, were provided with Volume I and II of the self-study brief in advance of the scheduled review and then met virtually (due to pandemic restrictions) over two days with the:

- Vice-Provost, School of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies
- Associate Vice-Provost, School of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies
- Associate Vice-Provost, Academic Planning, Policy and Faculty Relations
- Director, Office of Academic Quality and Enhancement
- Dean of the Faculty of Information and Media Studies
- Associate Dean Graduate and Postdoctoral
- Graduate Program Chair
- Graduate Program Committee
- Manager, Computing Services
- Director, FIMS Graduate Library
- Graduate Program and Department Staff
- Program Faculty Members
- Graduate Students

Following the virtual site visit, the external reviewers submitted a comprehensive report of their findings which was sent to the Program and 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 (FAR) of the Master of Media in Journalism and Communication (MMJC) Program. The FAR is collated and submitted to the SGPS and to SUPR-G by the Internal Reviewer with the support of the Office of Academic Quality and Enhancement.

Summative Assessment – External Reviewers’ Report

External reviewers shared that they were *“impressed with the commitment of program leadership and faculty members to create a rewarding professional and academic program that prepares graduates for meaningful careers in Journalism and Communications. The program appears to be ahead of the curve when it comes to addressing EDID issues in curriculum and in practice.”*

Strengths of the Program

- Faculty members are highly qualified award-winning journalists, authors, communication professionals, researchers, and filmmakers.
- Focused effort made to increase representation of professionals from non-dominant backgrounds in its selection of guest speakers and visiting journalists.

Similarly, instructors have reviewed their syllabi to be more inclusive of the voices of racialized journalists, communicators and academics.

- Faculty and students were very pleased with the fully equipped studio, video editing suites, and audio production studios with broadcast capabilities, equipment, etc.
- The Program Chair's meeting with incoming students ensures they have a more personalized experience in the program.
- Town Hall meetings with students twice a semester as a collective way for students to pass on concerns and suggestions.
- Outstanding program retention.

Areas of Concern or Prospective Improvement

- Heavy reliance on external stakeholders (notably journalism and communications professionals) to support EDID initiatives.
- Operationalizing the learning outcomes via specific courses could better distinguish between Journalism and Communications streams.
- Consider implementing a prior learning assessment policy to enable students with degrees in Journalism or Communications to transfer for credit.
- Offer an in-house internship with community partners as an alternative option to off-campus unpaid internship may optimally meet the needs of a variety of students.
- While the program provides a solid foundation in Communications, it lacks courses that emphasize communications management.
- A formal endorsement by a professional organization, such as Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS), could ensure the quality of the Communications stream under the Management Pathway to the profession.
- The lack of a culminating event following the internship gives students limited incentive to return to campus.
- Replacing the Capstone project with a third-semester experiential learning course may be a good option.
- The workload in the first two semesters of the program is intensive. Consider balancing workload by extending the length to four semesters, rethinking the five-course first semester, or do away with the capstone project.

Summary of the Reviewers' Recommendations and Program/Faculty Responses

The following are the reviewers' recommendations in the order listed by the external reviewers. Recommendations requiring implementation have been marked with an asterisk (*).

Reviewers' Recommendation	Program/Faculty Response
<p>Recommendation #1*: Communications Stream Differentiate between Journalism and Communication streams. To do so, consider: 1) splitting MMJC 9202: Advanced Communications into two course offerings, such as Strategic Communications Management and Crisis Communications; 2) getting a formal recognition and endorsement by a professional organization, such as Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS).</p>	<p>Program: The program agrees with the reviewers that getting the balance right between journalism and communications is important to the success of the program. In addition to a number of course level changes and a dedicated hire since 2015, the program aims to fill another tenure-track position with a background in professional communications.</p> <p>As part of a curriculum review the program will take a fresh look at what is currently covered in the program in communications and make sure there is enough of a focus on areas like strategic communications management and planning, persuasive writing, and crisis communications. There is a limit to the number of courses small program like the MMJC can offer. Creating new courses by splitting current ones will be considered but may not be feasible.</p> <p>While formal recognition and endorsement by a professional organization such as the Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS) has been examined in the past, the MMJC is not a Public Relations program and does not offer courses on advanced theoretical or advanced research knowledge. The MMJC program does however introduce content to prepare students to write the CPRS' Public Relations Knowledge exam, which they may choose to do after completing the program.</p> <p>Faculty: The Faculty has put substantial resources into bolstering the Communications side of the MMJC program and continues to support the program's ongoing efforts, not just to improve the balance between Journalism and Communications, but to ensure that the students recognize that we are doing so.</p> <p>In accordance with the reviewers' recommendation, the program will be supported in its review of objectives and learning outcomes, and any resulting revisions to the curriculum.</p>
<p>Recommendation #2*: Experiential Learning Reconsider the nature and the duration of the capstone project by: 1) eliminating it altogether; or 2)</p>	<p>Program: The program included a proposal with the IQAP report to restructure the third semester which was supported by the reviewers. Create a third term focused on an experiential learning course like the one delivered during the pandemic will be explored. This approach would include an opportunity to do an off-campus internship during an optional fourth semester. The new structure would improve the learning</p>

<p>introducing a fourth-semester off-campus internship option with an experiential learning course similar to the one delivered during the pandemic during the third semester.</p>	<p>outcomes for all students, eliminate the capstone project, and address the financial burden of making what is often an unpaid internship a requirement for graduating with a MMJC degree.</p> <p>Faculty: The Faculty supports the Program's proposal to re-imagine the third term as this could result in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • better achievement of program-level learning outcomes for all students; • minimizing the structural inequities inherent in unpaid internship placements; and • better aligning with FIMS' strategic priority of Growing through Inclusion: Foregrounding ethical engagement while remaining attentive to injustice shapes FIMS' continuing commitments to inclusivity.
<p>Recommendation #3*: Equity, Inclusion and Diversity Hire tenure-track faculty and address potential barriers to attracting an inclusive pool of applicants. Expand the search to include candidates with master's degrees in Journalism and Communications with commensurate professional experience; include language in the posting that encourages practitioners with experience covering underrepresented audiences to apply. Expand research capacity in the department when considering new hires as this would attract a more diverse pool of candidates to the program.</p>	<p>Program: The program supports the reviewers' call for it to focus efforts to recruit instructors who reflect a diversity of professional and lived experiences and welcomes the move by Western to approve a plan for FIMS to hire a new tenure-stream faculty member at the associate level to teach in, and eventually serve as, Graduate Program Chair.</p> <p>The program welcomes the suggestion to address potential barriers to attracting a more including pool of candidates, the search could be expanded to include candidates with master's degrees in journalism and communications with commensurate professional experience.</p> <p>The program's efforts to expand its teaching team will extend beyond full-time instructors to Limited Duties instructors with diverse professional and personal backgrounds, however the pool of applicants could be limited by the need for an instructor to live in or close enough to London to teach in person.</p> <p>Faculty: Along with the Program, the Faculty has worked steadily to identify and remediate systemic barriers to the participation of students and faculty from Indigenous communities and other underrepresented communities. Several recent faculty-level hires have taken place as well as affiliations with important Indigenous journalists through the Asper fellowship.</p> <p>The Faculty will continue to remove barriers to attract a more inclusive pool of candidates in the 2023-24 MMJC faculty search, and continue to prioritize professional experience in the hiring of our Limited Duties instructors, subject to the provisions of the Collective Agreement.</p>

Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan provides a summary of the recommendations that require action and/or follow-up. In each case, the Graduate Program Chair, in consultation with the SGPS and the Dean of the Faculty is responsible for enacting and monitoring the actions noted in Implementation Plan.

All reviewer recommendations have been prioritized for implementation; however, it should be noted that hiring decisions lie outside the scope of the IQAP review process. As such only part of recommendation #3 is articulated in the table below.

Recommendation	Proposed Action and Follow-up	Responsibility	Timeline
Recommendation #1: Differentiate and review balance between Journalism and Communication streams.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to review Production Week to ensure balance between Journalism and Communication. • Review program objectives, learning outcomes and curriculum with the aim of improving and possibly increasing the program’s communications content. • Continue efforts to improve the balance between Journalism and Communications, and to ensure that the students recognize that common competencies are applicable to both streams. • Consideration of a particular expertise in Communications for upcoming hires. 	Graduate Chair Associate Dean	By July 2025 By July 2024
Recommendation #2: Reconsider the nature and the duration of the capstone project by introducing a fourth-semester internship option.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and submit proposed changes (as articulated in the response above) for submission to SUPR-G by end of fall 2023. 	Graduate Chair Associate Dean	Ideal implementation of changes for 2024-2025
Recommendation #3: Address potential barriers to attracting an inclusive pool of applicants when hiring.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize the program’s commitment to diversifying the pool of full-time and part-time faculty candidates, considering more diverse professional and personal backgrounds, as consistent with the Collective Agreement. 	Dean Associate Dean Graduate Chair	Ongoing