

UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR
CYCLICAL PROGRAM REVIEW (CPR)
FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN: SCHOOL OF CREATIVE ARTS
UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE PROGRAMS
April 2026

Executive Summary of the Cyclical Program Review of the School of Creative Arts

In accordance with the University's Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), this final assessment report provides a synthesis of the external review and the internal responses of the undergraduate and graduate programs in the School of Creative Arts.

In addition to identifying the strengths of the programs, together with opportunities for program improvement and enhancement, the report prioritizes the recommendations that have been selected for implementation and sets out a plan (including the agent(s) responsible for addressing the recommendations and deadline dates) for follow-through. Timelines for monitoring the implementation of the recommendations are built into the process, with areas reporting mid-cycle on their progress to the Senate Program Development Committee, or earlier where there are significant concerns requiring urgent follow-up.

The School of Creative Arts 2023-2024 Self-Study submitted to the Office of Quality Assurance on April 25, 2025, included: 1) a summary of recommendations and actions from the last review; 2) descriptions and analysis of the programs, their learning outcomes, curriculum structure, modes of delivery, assessment methods, and student experience; 3) information on enrolments as well as financial, physical, and human resources; and 4) the program data including the standard data package provided by the Office of Quality Assurance. Included in the appendices to the Self-Study were faculty member CVs and undergraduate and graduate course syllabi.

The School of Creative Arts programs were reviewed by Dr. Karin Di Bella (School of Fine and Performing Arts, Brock University), Dr. Natalie Waldburger (Faculty of Art, OCAD University) and Dr. Sarah Woodruff Atkinson (Faculty of Human Kinetics, University of Windsor). In addition to assessing the Self-Study, the Review Team conducted a two-day in-person site visit on June 9-10, 2025, which included meetings with faculty, students, staff, academic librarian, the Associate Vice-President, Academic, the Director of the School, and the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences.

In their report (July 8, 2025), the Review Team confirmed that the undergraduate programs meet the IQAP evaluation criteria and are generally aligned with the University's mission, vision, and strategic plan; and offer suggestions for initiatives which could further strengthen connections to the University's strategic priorities. Admission requirements for the Music programs are appropriate. For the Visual Arts (including VABE), a portfolio is not required for admission which is unusual and, though this makes the programs more accessible to students, can result in varying levels of preparedness and commitment from incoming students. The Review Team noted that program structure, requirements, assessment methods, and learning outcomes were clear, appropriate, and aligned with degree-level expectations, at the time of the review; though they cautioned that the program structure and requirements may soon not meet program objectives and learning outcomes. Specifically, they cautioned that "[t]he impacts of budget cuts and understaffing are making it challenging to maintain the program-level learning outcomes and drastic redesign is needed, administratively and curricularly." There is a need to carefully and systematically review Music and Visual Arts curriculum with a view to tightening focus and program offerings, and incorporating content that addresses student concerns about the lack of professional readiness.

The Review Team noted that the programs are delivered by a team of highly talented, specialized faculty, many of whom have received national and international recognition for their research and creative work. However, the research requirements are not being met evenly across the programs due to the heavy workloads in administration and service. The Review Team also noted that there is a heavy reliance on sessional faculty for the Visual Arts and VABE program, which they cautioned could compromise consistency in instruction, mentorship, and curriculum

continuity. Despite these challenges, the Review Team noted that faculty and staff work hard to provide a positive student experience.

Overall, the Review Team noted that the programs meet their stated objectives and learning outcomes, at this time, but that, without change, this will not be the case for much longer. The Review Team was especially concerned with the heavy administrative and service workloads and the understaffing of technical support staff, noting that the School is stretched beyond capacity in its current state and that the programs “would be well advised to tighten their curricular focus for the short term, honing their program mission and direction, so as to better place themselves in line for a future strategic hire as soon as one may become available.” Specific to the Visual Arts program, the reviewers noted that “[t]o sustainably address budgetary constraints while maintaining academic rigour and artistic integrity, the Visual Art program should consider a phased redesign of its curriculum that both streamlines resource use and enhances student learning outcomes.” While the reviewers commended Music for having completed a curriculum revision to support continued program delivery and minimize costs, they noted that it should further review its elective offerings and “look closely at its strengths to determine where to focus its quickly dissipating energies.”

The Director of the School of Creative Arts and the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences submitted their responses to the External Reviewers’ Report (November 14, 2025 and January 6, 2026, respectively), addressing the recommendations, identifying follow-up actions, and providing clarification or corrections, as appropriate. The Senate Program Development Committee (PDC) Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan (April 2026) considered all the above documentation. The Executive Summary and Implementation Plan, along with any response from the area on the final recommendations, were submitted to Senate in May 2026.

Final Recommendations and Implementation Plan (in priority order)

Final recommendations were arrived at by the Program Development Committee, following a review and assessment of the External Reviewers report and the responses from the Director of the School of Creative Arts and the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences.

Recommendation 1: That the School undertake and report on further curriculum review and redesign. In doing so, it should consider the following:

Visual Arts:

- a. Addressing budget shortfalls through curricular innovation in Visual Art, such as
 - i. Introducing Large-Format Studio-Seminar Hybrid Courses:
Replacing one or two low-enrolment, resource-intensive studio courses with high-enrolment (60+ students) studio-seminar hybrids. These courses would integrate conceptual frameworks, critical theory, and technical instruction in a format that supports collective critique and independent project development. Assignments would include artwork deliverables to ensure continuity of studio practice.
 - ii. Expanding For-Credit Experiential and Work-Integrated Learning (WIL):
Developing more structured, for-credit experiential learning opportunities that are led or supervised by faculty.
 - iii. Implementing Interdisciplinary “Cluster” Courses or Pathways:
Encouraging course clustering across Visual Art and related disciplines (e.g., digital media, design, curatorial studies) that allow for shared resources, cross-listed classes, and interdisciplinary collaboration. These clusters can be framed around themes such as sustainability, identity, or emerging technologies, and can support more efficient scheduling and facility use.
 - iv. Prioritizing Program Identity and Signature Experiences:
Focusing investment in a smaller number of signature studio experiences that reflect the program’s unique strengths, such as community engagement, critical theory, or experimental practices. A more focused and distinct identity can help attract students and external partnerships, while allowing other areas to scale back without diminishing the program’s core value.
 - v. Exploring opportunities to create synergies between teaching and research, such as the already existing curricular integration with the INCUBATOR Lab and its internationally recognized focus on bio art.

- vi. With the current well-structured, foundational first-year curriculum in place, upper-year courses should be redesigned to create more flexible learning environments that connect to external communities and professional networks. Capstone projects could emerge through faculty mentorship, enabling students to develop their own creative research pathways.

Music

- b. Leveraging local performers across many styles, integrating this into the Music program.
- c. Pursuing articulation agreements between the Music programs and St. Clair College programs, including their Musical Theatre program.

Agents: School Council, Visual Arts and Music faculty members

Completion by: Mid-Cycle Report

Recommendation 2: That the School report on efforts to make a case to the Dean of the Faculty, as resources become available, for new faculty hiring that is representative of different designated groups.

Agents: Director, faculty members

Completion by: Mid-Cycle Report

Recommendation 3: That the School report on its review, and any revisions to, its internal governance structure, consistent with Senate bylaws, with a view to: 1) ensuring that each of Visual Arts, VABE, and Music lead curriculum review exercises specific to their programs; and 2) focusing the content of SoCA-level meetings to issues affecting the overall School and approving proposals for curricular change.

Agents: Director, School Council

Completion by: Mid-Cycle Report

Recommendation 4: That the School report on efforts to build community and morale among and between faculty, staff, and students. Examples include: hosting Faculty/technician/staff focused events-performances, exhibitions featuring faculty research; supporting students in reviving and participating in student-led clubs and initiatives; and encouraging students to participate in the LEAD Scholars program.

Agents: Director, faculty members

Completion by: Mid-Cycle Report

Recommendation 5: That the School consider offering VABE as a BDes for the purposes of accessing a higher level of government subsidies and increased tuition fees; and consider expansion of the program including more bi-directional opportunities such that UDM students could take VA courses and an expansion of the model to other disciplines.

Agents: Director, VABE faculty members, School Council

Completion by: Mid-Cycle Report

Recommendation 6: That the School report on efforts to build greater alignment with each of the strategic priorities in the Aspire Strategic Plan.

Agents: Director, faculty members, School Council

Completion by: Mid-Cycle Report