

New Program Proposal Appraisal Report Template – Undergraduate Program

Name of Program: Interactive Digital Media Specialist, B.A., UTM
Faculty/Division: University of Toronto Mississauga
Name of Reviewer: Professor John Unsworth
Dean, Graduate School of Library and Information Science
Director, Illinois Informatics Institute
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
Date of Review: March 4th, 2011

Report Summary

The proposal for an Interactive Digital Media Specialist B.A. presents a well thought-out curriculum that leverages existing faculty and their strengths, in units on two campuses of the University, in order to teach students how to combine production and reflection, critique and performance, in the creation of digital media. From a practical point of view, the resources to launch such a program, the student demand for the program, and the employer demand for graduates are all well documented in the proposal. Without altering the program as proposed, the units offering it might consider strategies for allowing students to combine material from different modules, at later points in the program. Consideration might also be given to strategies for crediting work experience, as these students may often come in with some that is relevant.

Program evaluation criteria

1. Objectives

a) Consistency of the program with the institution's mission and unit's academic plans.

The proposed program seems consistent with the academic plans of both participating units, and it looks like a viable partnership across two campuses of the University of Toronto, which no doubt has value to the University as a whole. The community of iSchools, of which FIS is a leading member, is characterized by programs that have both the graduate and professional programs that FIS has and undergraduate programs like the one it is proposing. As noted in the *Rationale* section of the proposal, the general undertaking here seems aligned with the *Toward 2030* strategic plan for the University.

b) Clarity and appropriateness of the program's requirements and associated learning outcomes in addressing the academic division's undergraduate or graduate Degree Level Expectations.

The proposal does an admirable job of identifying its intended learning outcomes and situating them with respect to the program's requirements. One might hope that as the program develops, it will be able to offer more modules than it requires; in the meanwhile, the units might consider offering the option for students to design their own module out of existing courses not already taken, with the approval of an advisor. That would give students flexibility to design some part of the program to meet their own needs and interests.

c) Appropriateness of the degree or diploma nomenclature.

The name proposed for the degree is accurate and unambiguous.

2. Admission requirements

a) Appropriateness of the program's admission requirements for the learning outcomes established for completion of the program.

According to the proposal, admission requirements don't differ from those of other Specialist programs at UTM. CCT109 and CCT110 seem like appropriate first-year pre-requisites for this curriculum.

b) Sufficiency of explanation of any alternative requirements for admission into the program such as minimum grade point average or additional languages or portfolios, along with how the program recognizes prior work or learning experience.

Minimum GPA is defined in the proposal. Alternative requirements such as additional language or portfolios are not mentioned, nor are strategies for recognizing prior work or learning experience. The latter two might be accommodated by petition under the program's structural elements called "awareness of limits of knowledge" and "autonomy and professional capacity," or by substituting experience for the work-based learning course required in "Application of Knowledge."

3. Structure

Appropriateness of the program's structure and regulations to meet specified program learning outcomes and Degree Level Expectations.

The structure as proposed is closely tied to learning outcomes and degree-level expectations. There is a good balance between production and communication, on the one hand, and reflection and method on the other.

4. Program content

a) Ways in which the curriculum addresses the current state of the discipline or area of study.

The curriculum addresses the current state of its area of study by involving faculty who come from backgrounds in humanities, social sciences, and information science, and by combining production and performance with critical analysis and reflection.

b) Identification of any unique curriculum or program innovations or creative components.

The production of interactive digital media as a focus of this curriculum will be unique, though related to journalism, communication, advertising, or other professions and disciplines. There will be good opportunities in this curriculum for creativity.

5. Mode of delivery

Appropriateness of the proposed mode(s) of delivery (distance learning, compressed part-time, online, mixed-mode or non-standard forms of delivery, flex-time options) to meet the intended program learning outcomes and Degree Level Expectations.

This appears to be a program that will be delivered face-to-face, with no online or mixed-mode delivery methods, at least at the level of whole courses or the whole degree. While it is possible that this program could be delivered online at some point in the future, at present it is fairly difficult to teach some of the hands-on components in that way. The fact that the program involves faculty and

students on two campuses means that it will have some interesting culture-building challenges to overcome, though, and those will be distance-based, in part. The proposed mode of delivery seems appropriate; I would advise some deliberate steps to build a successful antipodal culture.

6. Assessment of teaching and learning

a) Appropriateness of the proposed methods for the assessment of student achievement of the intended program learning outcomes and Degree Level Expectations.

The proposed methods for assessment are appropriate, given the kind of things students will be asked to learn and demonstrate in this program. These are the ways we assess learning in the humanities and qualitative social sciences.

b) Completeness of plans for documenting and demonstrating the level of performance of students, consistent with the academic division's statement of its Degree Level Expectations.

It's not clear that this is addressed by the proposal.

7. Resources

a) Adequacy of the administrative unit's planned utilization of existing human, physical and financial resources, and any institutional commitment to supplement those resources to support the program.

The personnel plan for this seems well worked out: good faculty with appropriate expertise exist in adequate numbers across the two participating units. Some commitment of institutional resources for lab and studio space is required, but you can't do this kind of learning without that commitment.

b) Participation of a sufficient number and quality of faculty who are competent to teach and/or supervise in the program.

As noted above, the expertise and quality of faculty required for this program are already available in the participating units.

c) Adequacy of resources to sustain the quality of scholarship and research activities of undergraduate students, including library support, information technology support, and laboratory access.

These are all accounted for in appendices F and G, and in the statement on Space/Infrastructure in the proposal. I assume that the two participating units have appropriate IT support, given the nature of what they already do.

d) Adequacy of and planning for:

- **Numbers and quality of faculty and staff to achieve the goals of the program.**

This is on target: staffing projections are well supported.

- **Commitment to provide the necessary resources in step with the implementation of the program.**

As far as I can tell, the commitment is there. I note the proposal's stated need for performance and visualization lab space, and it's not clear from the proposal that the parent units here will provide those.

- **Planned/anticipated class sizes.**

The numbers of students are achievable, and class sizes are reasonable.

- **Provision of supervision of experiential learning opportunities (if required).**

This seems mostly to be covered by CCT410, and the practical experience of making interactive digital media in other classes along the way.

- **The role of adjunct and part-time faculty.**

It isn't clear from the proposal that adjunct or part-time faculty will be involved.

9. Quality and other indicators

- a) **Quality of the faculty (e.g., qualifications, research, innovation and scholarly record; appropriateness of collective faculty expertise to contribute substantively to the proposed program).**

There are high-quality faculty in both units, with strong professional orientations in both as well. The faculty are individually strong, and collectively complementary, in ways that will provide good intellectual substance and structure for this program.

- b) **Program structure and faculty research that will ensure the intellectual quality of the student experience.**

All indications are that the program structure and faculty research will provide students with a high-quality intellectual experience.