



September 25, 2019

Professor Susan McCahan
Vice-Provost, Academic Programs
Office of the Vice-President and Provost
University of Toronto

Follow-up Report: External Review of the Department of Arts, Culture and Media

Dear Susan,

Thank you for your letter of April 11, 2019 requesting our one-year follow-up report to the 2017-18 external review of the Department of Arts, Culture and Media and its undergraduate programs in Art History and Visual Culture, Arts Management, Curatorial Studies, Media Studies, Music and Culture, New Media Studies, Studio, and Theatre and Performance Studies.

As your letter notes, the Committee on Academic Policy and Programs (AP&P) requested a one-year follow-up report focused on two areas:

- The development of a clear vision for the Department; and
- Space concerns.

Developing a Clear Vision for the Department

In their report, the reviewers acknowledge that ACM has worked very hard over the past five years to develop a departmental vision and articulate how its nine programs fit into that vision; however, they suggest that more work is needed to develop ACM's strategic identity.

In our Administrative Response from October 9, 2018, we note that ACM has been engaged in a multifaceted visioning exercise for the past several years. While ACM deeply appreciates the recommendations of the review team and their clear desire to give it food for thought, there is some concern that the brevity of the reviewers' visit could not permit them sufficient time to appreciate the many connections that exist across the Department's nine programs. This connective tissue comes in many forms:

Administrative:

- The Departmental Council is ACM's constitutionally-established body comprising representatives from all programs, the staff and study body.
- The council of Program Directors are academic advisers and advocates for the various academic programs in ACM who meet regularly to discuss common goals and challenges.

Curricular:

- Programs that span multiple disciplines, for example the new Major in Media, Journalism and Digital Cultures (which combines Media Studies + Journalism), the new Major in Arts and Media Management (which combines Arts Management + Media), and Curatorial Studies (which combines Studio + Art History and Visual Culture).

Student-oriented:

- ACM Connects is a hub in the Department supporting its significant schedule of annual events; it also oversees student work study and volunteer positions supporting curricular and co-curricular activities across all programs.
- ARTSA is a very active Departmental Student Association with representation from across all ACM programs.
- ArtSideOut is a one-day annual festival of all arts, completely student led and funded, and now in its 12th year of operation.

Nevertheless, ACM remains committed to fully engaging with the reviewer's recommendations. Towards this end, following the receipt of the review report, the Department's Policy & Planning Committee undertook a discussion around the concept of developing a mission statement and what that would mean for them.

This Committee noted that the Department already has a general statement about its shared interests on its website: ACM is "a vibrant department that brings together a wealth of artistic and academic activity under one umbrella;" as well as a description of the four 'research themes' that establish shared ideas and approaches among faculty, namely: (1) contemporary culture in flux; (2) cultural history, theory and ethics; (3) (re)making art and culture; and (4) media, institutions and the politics of participation.

Although the Department did work on a mission statement, the end result was found to be unsatisfying, and not really an improvement on existing public information and messaging. Going forward ACM will continue to actively re-visit the concept of a mission statement, but in terms of a unifying vision for the Department, they believe this already exists and is well communicated to faculty, students and staff.

Space

In their report, the reviewers suggest that the wide distribution of ACM spaces across UTSC makes it more difficult for the Department to function in a coherent way, or to establish a symbolic presence on campus.


In our Administrative Response from October 9, 2018, we note that space is an historic problem for ACM, and campus leadership is acutely aware of the severity of ACM's space needs. While it is true that the inadequacies of its spaces, and their distribution around campus, are a challenge for ACM – particularly as it continues to grow each year – nevertheless, some important developments have been made this past year.

The UTSC “Arts & Culture Building” Project Planning Committee has been struck and has been meeting since July 2019. It has representation from across ACM (4 faculty members, 1 staff member, and 1 student), and is being Co-chaired by the ACM Department Chair (Professor Barry Freeman). It aims to produce a project report by February 2020 for review by University governance, with a goal of a new building by ~2025.

ACM is renovating two existing spaces in its inventory to create (i) a New Media and Digital Image Innovation Lab; and (ii) a Sound Creativity Lab. These new spaces will address some of the immediate need in the unit. Phase 1 of the New Media Lab has been completed, with Phase 2 scheduled to be completed in Summer 2020. The Sound and Creativity lab renovations will be completed by Winter 2020.

Finally, ACM is doing what it can with existing inventory to aid with departmental coherence. The secondary effects created by the recent completion of Highland Hall has made it possible for ACM to consolidate its presence on the 4th floor of the Humanities Wing, although faculty offices remain spread between two buildings (H-Wing and the Arts and Administration building); however, this is the most that can be accomplished in the short term. In the medium term, with the planned completion of a new Instructional Centre in 2023, space freed in the Arts and Administration Building by the relocation of administrative offices will allow more opportunities to improve the coherence and quality of space. The long-term goal is to move the entire academic unit to the proposed new Arts & Culture Building within 6 years.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MA', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Professor Maydianne Andrade
Acting Vice-Principal Academic and Dean