

MEMORANDUM

Date: March 25th, 2024

To: The Council Committee on Academic Mission (CCAM) University of Regina

From: The School of Journalism, University of Regina

Re: Written response to External Reviewers' Report for the 2019 Academic Unit Review

Please consider the following our formal written response to the Council Committee on Academic Matters (CCAM) in regard to the External Reviewers' Report for the Academic Unit Review of the School of Journalism that took place in March, 2019.

The External Reviewers report notes that the School of Journalism measures its own success primarily in terms of graduates' careers, and despite its tiny size, enjoys a reputation as among Canada's top J-schools. An astonishing proportion of its recent graduates are full-time employed at news organizations in the prairie provinces. The School has long boasted, and continues to deliver, Canada's only journalism internship program with mandatory paid placements, which uniquely last at least one full semester and which often lead directly to continuing full-time employment. At a graduate level, the School now offers a unique one-year Master's program centred on the production of a long-form "passion project" work of journalism.

However, the School also faced a number of challenges including low enrolment and a lack of collaboration with other units at the University.

Here is a summary of the unit review recommendations:

1. Reimagine the school's mandate and size by a) developing a professional communications program, and b) enhancing Indigenization efforts
2. Develop street-ready journalists.
3. Adapt updated course content/descriptions for the digital era.
4. Establish new collaborations across the University.
5. Find efficiencies in the MJ curriculum
6. Connect more students with the J-school
7. Re-imagine our space
8. Engage University expertise in marketing, recruitment and advancement.
9. Strengthen sessional recruitment

In its Progress Report in 2021, the School of Journalism highlighted the steps taken to address these recommendations. The School of Journalism commissioned the Faculty of Business Administration's Hill and Levene School of Business Centre for Management Development (CMD), to prepare a business plan. The plan concentrated on the priorities helping the School to re-image itself. In particular, the School focused on moving to the balanced approach in this plan because the inclusion of communication and media courses broadens the program for students and updates the program to better match the journalism job market. Both reasons are expected to draw higher student enrolment.

The Progress Report has also proposed further enhancing Indigenization efforts. The School of Journalism has a long tradition of working with Indigenous academics and journalists to teach students how to responsibly and respectfully cover First Nations people, communities and issues. This has resulted in an impressive list of distinguished Indigenous alumni now working in journalism and communications. But the School agreed that it can do even better, strengthening its cooperation with the Indigenous Communications Arts program. The curriculum also started to undergo changes in line with the current requirements of digital journalism, and our updated content and descriptions better aligned with current industry standards and approaches.

However, at the time this report was submitted, Covid-19 ravaged the School affecting both our enrolment and class delivery. The J-School continued to confront significant challenges in 2021-22. In terms of threats, our School was not alone in seeing enrollments drop through the industry's crisis. However, our School is smaller and the COVID-dip has hit our hands-on program harder than larger or lecture-driven programs.

Sustaining the program has also been made very difficult because our core faculty staffing has been reduced from 5.5 to 2 full-time positions in the last few years. All these developments led to proposing a program redesign in order to make it sustainable in a short term, and prosperous in the mid term. Suspending admissions for a year freed up time for the remaining academic staff in the J-School to transform the J-School's curriculum in light of the new reality.

The academic unit review recommendations were treated as a guide to redeveloping our program. Two existing faculty members put a tremendous amount of work in this redesign effort. The Faculty of Arts has lent the School its unwavering support at all stages of the redesign. This collaborative work resulted in relaunching a new , Journalism News Media, and Communications program which has been unanimously approved at all stages of the Academic Governance.

The streamlined program will allow students to get a Journalism degree with 27-credit hours (15 course-based hours and 12 internship-based hours). Those classes will give a core understanding of journalism as a profession, and they will equip students with necessary skills for being prepared for internships in the industry. New Communications classes will attract the students who are interested in careers in the field of Communications.

The complete redesign of the Journalism program aims at developing flexible options for getting a degree that allows for employment both in Journalism and Communications . The whole redesign has been informed by the academic unit review. The review was beneficial to the School of Journalism, and the very relaunch of the program can be treated as the main outcome of the review. Below is our more detailed response to the Report’s Recommendations. The 18 month response was summarized above. The 5 -year final response and initiatives and plans for the coming three to five years are combined in order to reflect the nature of the program changes and to add a structural coherence to the response.

External Review Report	Planned Actions and/or Current Status
<p>1. Reimagine the school’s mandate and size by a) developing a professional communications program, and b) enhancing Indigenization efforts</p>	<p>We believe this one is the most important for moving the School of Journalism forward. The redesign builds Indigenous Communication Arts (INCA) and Public Relations (PR) courses into the program.</p> <p>A).The School of Journalism worked together with The Centre for Management Development (CMD) on the Journalism Business Plan.</p> <p>The plan called “balanced” those schools that have comprehensive departments offering strong programs in the areas of journalism and communication.</p> <p>They have made a point of not separating the two disciplines, but rather using them both as tools to develop well-rounded students for their post-university careers. The J- School took this approach.</p> <p>Our program states that the students must complete two of PR 100, PR 101, or PR 200 to meet the degree’s requirements. Communication interns also must take these classes before they go to their internship placements.</p> <p>Two new in-house courses with strong communication components are being developed. The students must take JRN 215, International Media and Communications. This class adds an international dimension to the study of communications. JRN 330, Mass Communication. Theory and Practice. This course is designed to introduce basic tenets of communications theory and practice. It will also consider forms of communication practice beyond such as</p>

	<p>public relations and addresses communication threats to democratic societies.</p> <p>These classes are introduced as new required courses to further expand the theoretical and practical scope of students' learning. Our plans for the next three years include collaborating with the PR-certificate program aimed at encouraging journalism students to complete the PR-certificate program, and for certificate students to join the journalism program as majors.</p> <p>B) The School of Journalism has a long tradition of working with Indigenous academics and journalists to teach students how to responsibly and respectfully cover First Nations people, communities and issues. This has resulted in an impressive list of distinguished Indigenous alumni now working in journalism and communications. Our current teaching capacity does not allow us to teach separate classes fully dedicated to the Indigenization in Journalism. However, individual faculty members indigenize course content, especially in the areas of media and society, digital news writing and contemporary issues in journalism. However, our program collaborates with Indigenous Communication Arts (INCA) incorporating INCA 391 AA 3:3-0 Investigative and Collaborative Journalism into program requirements. This course is an introduction to the techniques and processes of investigative journalism, with a focus on Indigenous issues, research and storytelling collaborations. Our program also suggests that the students can take INCA 283 3:3-0 Indigenous Media in Canada to fulfill our Major Requirements. In this class, students review Indigenous media in Canada, the legislative and policy developments that have impacted communication, and the role in Indigenous media in constituting alternative public spheres of discourse. The School of Journalism is also open to offering the INCA students our classes without restrictions.</p> <p>We as a unit continue to work with the University Advancement and industry partners to obtain funding for the Chair in Indigenous People and Media during the next three years.</p> <p>Indigenous Communication Arts (INCA) offerings and the Certificate in Reconciliation Studies each reflect the increasing importance of Indigenization in contemporary journalism and professional communications. This special mention alerts students who may be interested in developing specializations in this area.</p>
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<p>2. Develop street-ready journalists.</p>	<p>We feel this is already one of our core strengths, as evidenced by the fact newsrooms throughout this city and province are filled with our graduates, almost all of whom are working in the field within a year of graduating. However, we continue to develop new approaches in preparing the students to be ready to meet the demands of the industry for their reporters from the get-go. Our classes JRN 200 and JRN 201 are specifically designed to address the requirements for street-ready journalists.</p>
<p>3. Adapt updated course content/descriptions for the digital era.</p>	<p>The School of Journalism has completely reworked its curriculum in order to reflect the realities of digital journalism in the industry and in our class content. Offering a realistic and achievable solution to the School's limited teaching capacity, this redesign includes 4 inter-related components: 1) making JRN 100 a requirement for majors; 2) streamlining 300 level offerings to reflect JRN majors' participation in JRN 100 and new 200 level options; 3) supplementing them with cognate courses (e.g. INCA 391 and PR 100, 101 and 201) to better account for the evolving communications and cultural environment; 4) introducing JRN 330 as a new required course to further expand the theoretical and practical scope of students' learning; and 5) providing more interdisciplinary elective options and guidance to further economize, modernize, and strengthen the program. Specifically, JRN 200 Introduction to Digital News Writing, JRN 201 Introduction to Broadcast and Digital Journalism, and JRN 320 Advanced Broadcast and Digital Journalism constitute the offerings that fully reflect and respond to the industry requirements and students' demand in an ever evolving world of digital journalism. These classes will help educate a next generation of digital journalists in the next three to five years.</p>
<p>4. Establish new collaborations across the University.</p>	<p>.The new Journalism program has managed to establish new collaborations within the Faculty of Arts and across the University at large. There are connections with the Faculty of Business and the PR Certificate program They will grow as we expand into professional communications and public relations courses. We explore the opportunities for collaboration that exist with the Faculty of MAP. Some of their classes are on the recommended list in order to meet the requirements of the program. Another move in the redesign will also be in line with the reviewers' suggestion to make a concerted effort to</p>

	<p>establish and nurture substantial and meaningful connections and synergies with other units in the Faculty of Arts, and more specifically its Indian Communication Arts (INCA). The current program encompasses a wide variety of classes suggested as electives from those units. The School also opens all its classes to students from the Faculty of Arts and the university as a whole.</p> <p>These steps connect the School to the broader university community and widen the pool and enhance the quality of applicants.</p>
<p>5. Find efficiencies in the MJ curriculum</p>	<p>The Master of Journalism program was suspended from 2023 to 2025 to help the existing faculty concentrate on relaunching the undergraduate program. However, even during this challenging time, the School came up with a new and strong proposal of a course-based graduate program. The proposal gives the School an opportunity to restructure the program in a way that better addresses both the high demand for our MJ program and the rapidly-evolving nature of the field of journalism. A shift to a course-based program will eliminate the need to cap enrollments based on limited supervisory capacity. This could increase annual intake capacity of graduate students from 6 to 16, with existing resources.</p> <p>2. By adopting a less rigid series of courses that must be taken as part of a project-focused cohort (i.e. full time and in sequence), it will also diversify applicants to include non-traditional students who require part-time study options (e.g. working journalists, single parents, people with disabilities). More diverse classrooms can further enrich the student experience.</p> <p>3) Expanded elective choice outside journalism (e.g. Indigenous Studies, English, Sociology, Political Science, or Film Studies) will enable students to pursue more wide-ranging disciplinary interests (e.g. literary journalism or propaganda studies) and expand their topic knowledge (e.g. Indigenous issues, comparative politics or climate change). In this way, the course-based option can help them develop deeper understanding of public issues and the craft of composition, film-making, etc. that go beyond the current scope of the professional project-based program. This change builds on the program's historic commitment to a socially critical, liberal arts embedded model for journalism education by offering up to 3 additional outside electives.</p> <p>The relaunch of the Masters course-based program over the next 3-5 years will strengthen both the reputation and attraction of the School for potential applicants. This relaunch does not require additional resources in the</p>

	<p>nearest future and would rely on the existing faculty and Dr. Aziz Douai to deliver the program.</p> <p>Dr. Douai, the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, has chosen the School of Journalism as his home department. Dr. Douai holds a PhD in Mass Communications.</p>
<p>6. Connect more students with the J-school</p>	<p>Developing and delivering a new introductory course, JRN 100, has proven to be an effective recruitment tool and means of connecting the School of Journalism to the broader university community.</p> <p>In our new program, the students will be able to take classes during all four years of their program fostering their connection with the School.</p> <p>Earlier exposure to JRN and JRN-related courses can increase enrolments across the JRN curriculum.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Moreover, moving toward the Faculty norm of integrated studies over four years provides both JRN and non-JRN students with greater flexibility. On the other hand, the four year configuration will enable non-JRN majors to take several JRN courses previously restricted to majors. 2) Greater flexibility of offerings across four years also increases program accessibility, particularly for non-traditional student segments. Rather than move through the program as full-time students taking their final two years of courses in a rigid sequence, working students, parents, practicing journalists, and members of historically disadvantaged communities will now be better able to study at their own pace—including part time studies. 3) From a quality of learning standpoint, more diverse classrooms can further enrich the student experience. 4) The School of Journalism collaborates with the Faculty of Arts to improve the School’s University website as well as more actively engage with the students and potential applicants online through social media. <p>We are expecting to see these stronger students’ connections with the program to result in an increased enrolment over the next 3 to 5 years.</p>
<p>7. Re-imagine our space</p>	<p>Whatever plans the reviewers and the J-School faculty could have about our space, they all became irrelevant. The Centre for Teaching and Learning moved into more than half of the space previously occupied by the J-School in 2023.</p>

	<p>However, the School managed to relocate most of its gear and documents related to the School’s rich history and journalistic legacy. We managed to preserve our television and radio studios, and most of our editing suites.</p>
<p>8. Engage University expertise in marketing, recruitment and advancement.</p>	<p>The J-School Head had a number of meetings with the University Advancement. The School has been productively working in 2023-24 with University Advancement in three areas: working with potential donors to establish new Chairs, promoting the School (especially its new communications focus), and finding potential communications scholarships and placements. Some of these collaborative efforts are at their initial phases, the others are in more advanced phases, but all together they represent a promising area with a great potential for recruitment and promotion of the J-School in the next three to five years.</p>
<p>9. Strengthen sessional recruitment</p>	<p>The School has been working hard with industry partners and University Advancement to continue existing and to obtain new funding for Chairs who are able to bring their expertise and recent industry experience to the classroom.</p>