

UTQAP Cyclical Review: Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan

1 Review Summary

Program(s) Reviewed:	Art History (HBA): Specialist, Major, Minor Art & Art History (HBA): Specialist, Major (joint program with Sheridan College) Cinema Studies (HBA): Major, Minor Visual Culture & Communication (HBA): Specialist Visual Culture (HBA): Minor Certificate in Curatorial Studies
Unit Reviewed:	Department of Visual Studies
Commissioning Officer:	Vice-Principal, Academic & Dean, University of Toronto Mississauga
Reviewers (Name, Affiliation):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professor Matthew C. Hunter, Chair, Department of Art History & Communication Studies, McGill University • Professor Amy Villarejo, Chair, Department of Film, Television, and Digital Media, University of California, Los Angeles
Date of Review Visit:	November 27-28, 2023
Review Report Received by VPAP:	March 14, 2024
Administrative Response(s) Received by VPAP:	September 16, 2024
Date Reported to AP&P:	October 22, 2024

Previous UTQAP Review

Date: February 25 – 26, 2016

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Significant Program Strengths

- Supportive, collegial department atmosphere
- Strong scholarly accomplishments of the faculty, with a high rate of success with SSHRC grants
- Well-documented and clearly communicated program learning outcomes, which include a good balance of tradition and innovation
- Art & Art History program with Sheridan has a unique balance of art history and studio art courses; expands from a traditional focus to incorporate a broader global vision
- Popular Visual Culture and Cinema Studies minors offer exciting possibilities with a strong emphasis on theoretical approaches
- Wide range of field trips, visiting speakers, and study abroad programs
- Blackwood Gallery represents an enormous advantage for the department
- Compares favourably to similar programs in the United States and the UK

Opportunities for Program Enhancement

- Addressing communication between Sheridan and the Department of Visual Studies to integrate the two experiences in students' programs of study
- Improving resources to support English language learners
- Improving classroom lighting, given the visual nature of the disciplines taught
- Expanding program offerings, including adding major options to the popular Cinema Studies and Visual Culture minors and creating a certificate in Curatorial Studies, and addressing the waning interest in the Visual Culture & Communication specialist
- Expanding the faculty complement plan to include cinema studies and Islamic art and architecture
- Addressing concerns about participation in the tri-campus graduate program
- Providing better support for the Blackwood Gallery, noting its potential for providing connections to the local community and beyond
- Strengthening the relationship with advancement to support the department's goal of creating an endowed chair

Current Review: Documentation and Consultation

Documentation Provided to Reviewers

Terms of Reference; Self-Study; Previous review documents (including External Reviewers Report, Summary Report, Decanal Administrative Response, and Final Assessment Report/Implementation Plan); UTM Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations (UUDLEs); UofT Facts & Figures (2021); UTM Vision Statement (2017); UTM Academic Plan (2017); UTM Viewbook (2023-24); U of T's "Framework for a New Structure of Academic Administration for the Three Campuses" (aka Tri-Campus Framework); Access to all Visual Studies course descriptions; Access to the curricula vitae of faculty.

Consultation Process

As determined by the Commissioning Officer, the reviewers met with Vice-Dean, Teaching & Learning and Associate Dean, Academic Programs; Department Chair; Department Staff; Blackwood Gallery Staff; Undergraduate Students; Cinema Studies and Visual Culture Faculty; Sessional Instructors; Art History Faculty; Teaching Assistants; Sheridan College Administration, Faculty and Staff; and Art and Art History Faculty.

Current Review: Findings and Recommendations

1. Undergraduate Program(s)

Unless otherwise noted, all bulleted comments apply to all programs reviewed.

The reviewers observed the following **strengths**:

- Overall quality
 - ▶ Department's self-study document noted as "truly exemplary"
 - ▶ DVS enrolments have generally trended upwards; the department is healthy and thriving
 - ▶ Programs are coherent and well-administered
- Objectives
 - ▶ Program objectives are clear, aligned with U of T standards, and consistent with the best global English-language education
- Admissions requirements
 - ▶ Admission standards are appropriate
- Curriculum and program delivery
 - ▶ Undergraduate programs "constitute a robust curriculum for addressing historical and emergent issues in visual culture"
 - ▶ The programs' sequences of required and elective courses are impressive and lucid, offering disciplinary specificity as well as opportunities for interdisciplinary exchange

- ▶ Teaching supports are provided by TAs who are primarily graduate students in art history, and in cinema and media studies
- Innovation
 - ▶ Robust initiatives have been undertaken to enhance student learning
- Assessment of learning
 - ▶ Modes of assessing learning outcomes are appropriate
- Student engagement, experience and program support services
 - ▶ Student surveys show remarkable satisfaction with courses offered at both UTM and Sheridan College
 - ▶ Undergraduate students, particularly those in the studio-based curriculum at Sheridan, show astonishing investment in the Art and Art History program, and play a significant role in peer education
 - ▶ Undergraduate student teaching assistants at Sheridan perform core pedagogical work in studio courses and offer counselling to peers, and express pleasure in both teaching and learning activities

The reviewers identified the following **areas of concern**:

- Overall quality
 - ▶ DVS's largest program, Art and Art History, which is offered jointly with Sheridan College and awards students a BA from UTM and an advanced diploma from Sheridan college "faces existential threat"
- Curriculum and program delivery
 - ▶ Complement of instructors at Sheridan contributing to the joint Art and Art History program has "atrophied"; what was once a complement of seven full-time faculty is now down to three
- Accessibility and diversity
 - ▶ "By far the most pressing issue [for DVS] is the changing nature of the undergraduate student body toward international students"
 - ▶ International enrolment in DVS has doubled since the previous review, and the unit has noted some concerns about declining English-language abilities among its student population

The reviewers made the following **recommendations**:

- Accessibility and diversity
 - ▶ The reviewers note that "a more comprehensive reckoning with UTM's changing student demographic" is a potential key long range planning opportunity for the unit
 - ▶ Opportunities are highlighted for DVS to play a lead role in campus and university-wide conversations regarding innovative teaching and learning involving ELL (English Language Learner) students; reviewers urge DVS faculty to work together "to formulate techniques and best practices for thinking/sensing/being beyond text"
 - ▶ Engagement of Sheridan instructors with ELL students noted as exemplary, and DVS faculty are encouraged to engage with Sheridan colleagues around matters of

pedagogical practice; reviewers also suggest that DVS might look to relevant precedents at other institutions, with Harvard noted as a key example

2. Graduate Program(s) – n/a

3. Faculty/Research

The reviewers observed the following **strengths**:

- Overall quality
 - ▶ Faculty demonstrate consistent success in winning SSHRC grants and other external supports, and enjoy strong publication and exhibition records
 - ▶ “[T]his faculty represents the best of early twenty-first century arts and moving image educators”
 - ▶ Faculty are navigating tri-campus constraints, and savouring the challenges of new cohorts of students and colleagues in exemplary fashion
 - ▶ Faculty members have pioneered innovative teaching
- Research
 - ▶ Faculty members contribute to tri-campus graduate programs in Art History, Cinema Studies, Comparative Literature, Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations and the Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape, and Design
 - ▶ Faculty access to SSHRC funding represents an “extraordinary source of research support that places them on par with colleagues in the UK and Europe”
 - ▶ DVS faculty have been successful in receiving SSHRC support for major collaborative projects
 - ▶ Faculty “clearly meet the highest expectations for research excellence in terms of their records of scholarly publication”
 - ▶ Faculty books have been published by top university presses, as well as in innovative trade, experimental and independent presses; faculty have authored well-respected and widely used textbooks; and faculty edit and contribute to top-ranked international journals
 - ▶ DVS faculty also include scholar-practitioners who combine publishing with curatorial work and exhibitions at the highest level
 - ▶ Faculty members integrate undergraduate and graduate student research into their own projects
- Faculty
 - ▶ Hiring of a third FTE faculty member in CIN noted as a wise investment (though reviewers note this will require a concomitant university investment in curricular delivery)
 - ▶ DVS has made extremely strong hires in Indigenous art and performance, Islamic art, and East Asian cinema and media since their previous review
 - ▶ Faculty members generally appear to have a reasonable teaching load, and intra-institutional mechanisms render service requirements transparent

- ▶ U of T salaries remain among the highest in Canadian public universities; the pension plan ensures long-term benefits; and the PTR plan ensures faculty salary adjustments; “[these] factors contribute to a high quality of life for many members of the faculty”

The reviewers identified the following **areas of concern**:

- Faculty
 - ▶ The costs of living and real estate in the GTA have risen sharply in recent years, “making recruitment of junior faculty a significant barrier to excellence”
 - ▶ Reviewers note challenges related to faculty human resource allocations and observe that the amount of work currently being done by faculty is “staggering”, and appears unsustainable
 - ▶ “[F]aculty in the department are aging and not being replaced. Four of DVS’s six full professors are nearing retirement age; no tenure-stream hire has been made since 2019.”
 - ▶ Reviewers note that UTM’s current regulations on tenure and promotion and the evaluation of creative work appear to date back to the late 1970s/early 1980s

The reviewers made the following **recommendations**:

- Faculty
 - ▶ Reviewers emphasize the institutional need to pay continued attention to providing sufficient faculty housing and benefits, to provide DVS with the capacity to continue to thrive through anticipated faculty turnover
 - ▶ Reviewers endorse proposed hiring of a research specialist in Black Visual Culture, provided that the role “is decoupled from administrative leadership of the Visual Culture and Communication program”
 - ▶ Noting that some exceptional junior DVS faculty are approaching tenure evaluation, reviewers recommend exploring whether changes to the UTM tenure and promotion process might be needed, to ensure that “creative professional activity”, in particular the collaborative, community-facing intellectual work exemplified by the Blackwood Gallery are appropriately considered and captured

4. Administration

Note: Issues that are addressed through specific University processes and therefore considered out of scope for UTQAP reviews (e.g., individual Human Resources issues, specific health and safety concerns) are routed to proper University offices to be addressed, and are therefore not included in the Review Summary component of the Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan.

The reviewers observed the following **strengths**:

- Relationships
 - ▶ Remarkably capable chair provides sound leadership
 - ▶ “[As an] interdisciplinary department, DVS operates through a complex sequence of intra/extramural partnerships and relationships”
 - ▶ “[T]he reviewers found much to admire in the scope and nature of DVS’s relationships”
- Organizational and financial structure
 - ▶ The Blackwood team “has done much within and beyond its modest bricks-and-mortar footprint” including an ambitious publication scheme, implementing a Curatorial Studies certificate, and making use of lightboxes to display photographic works outdoors
 - ▶ Reviewers were “heartened” to see the potential for the Blackwood Gallery Director position to hold a tenure-stream appointment in DVS, noting that such integration could strengthen both the gallery and the unit
 - ▶ Reviewers found DVS spaces, infrastructure and facilities “in much better condition than we had inferred from reading the self-study”
 - ▶ “In general, the organizational and financial structures of DVS appear to be consistent with those employed generally at UTM; we have no recommendations for the redeployment of existing resources”
- Long-range planning and overall assessment
 - ▶ DVS is an exceptional department, with faculty members whose research and creative work place them amongst the best in North America and beyond
- International comparators

The reviewers identified the following **areas of concern**:

- Relationships
 - ▶ COVID-19 has had “devastating” effects on norms of academic life and student well-being
 - ▶ Due to workload, recent cuts to the department’s autonomous funds, residual effects of COVID and other stressors, DVS “morale is lower than it has been in the past”
 - ▶ DVS faculty service in tri-campus graduate programs is highlighted as “fraught” in the unit’s self-study; and reviewers note that they were not invited to meet with faculty from cognate graduate units housed on the St. George campus

- ▶ Contributing TAs exhibit a somewhat low degree of autonomy and confidence as teachers
- ▶ “The relationship in most need of attention is that with Sheridan College”
- ▶ Although the joint A&AH program generates revenue and prestige for Sheridan, the COVID pandemic has been devastating for the College, which is now facing dire financial difficulties
- ▶ “The memorandum of agreement (MOA) between UTM and Sheridan is currently up for renewal. Neighboring UTM departments have already begun separating from Sheridan, with direct consequent for DVS. Messages are mixed about prospects for the MOA’s renewal; no clear lines of communication at the executive levels needed to secure agreement appear active. The stakes of this impasse register clearly to DVS: were A&AH programs ‘to fail due to Sheridan’s lack of investment in faculty to run them, DVS would be in serious trouble’”
- Organizational and financial structure
 - ▶ Concerns noted around infrastructure, in particular the role of the Blackwood Gallery and screening spaces in delivering DVS’s core educational mission; the instability of the Blackwood “clearly is affecting faculty and student morale”
 - ▶ “Problems at the Blackwood are structural and complex”; inadequate exhibition spaces cannot accommodate the needs of a working gallery; curatorial team offices do not adjoin the galleries; and the lack of standard storage facilities renders the Blackwood ineligible for many exhibitions and funding sources
 - ▶ The Blackwood’s standing challenges have been exacerbated by the collapse of a plan to create space for the Blackwood in the new ACT Building, and “[t]he distrust and anger [this] has generated are...real and palpable”
 - ▶ Need identified for a designated screening facility to support education in Cinema and Media Studies
 - ▶ Self-study highlights the absence of gathering spaces to encourage community building

The reviewers made the following **recommendations**:

- Relationships
 - ▶ Reviewers urgently recommend direct, high-level conversations between UTM and Sheridan senior leadership regarding the future of the partnership between the two institutions, “to generate swift, decisive action”
- Organizational and financial structure
 - ▶ Reviewers supportive of faculty requests for reliable DVD players connected to extant projectors in lecture rooms, and suggest that once these are in place leadership might work on a more sustainable future solution for projection and exhibition needs, noting that cinema and media studies represents a growth area for the unit and institution
 - ▶ UTM leadership urged “to work concertedly to advance the Blackwood’s needs;” “the gallery needs to be housed in a space appropriate to its ambitious goals”
 - ▶ Reviewers recommend that the approved hiring line for an Associate Director of the Blackwood Gallery be opened as quickly as possible

- Long-range planning and overall assessment
 - ▶ “We advise the administration to recognize this department less as a jewel in the crown in the arts or humanities than as an engine of excellence at UTM that might fuel and define broader institutional growth and aspiration”
 - ▶ To address concerns related to faculty workload, reviewers recommend considering closure of the Specialist track in Visual Culture and Communication, which charges deregulated tuition and is not supported by tenure stream faculty



Vice-Principal, Academic & Dean

September 16, 2024

Professor Susan McCahan
Vice-Provost, Academic Programs
University of Toronto

RE: UTQAP cyclical review of the Department of Visual Studies and its programs

Dear Professor McCahan,

Thank you for your letter of May 22, 2024 requesting the decanal administrative response to the November 27-28, 2023 review of the Department of Visual Studies and its undergraduate programs: Art History, HBA (Specialist, Major, Minor); Art & Art History, HBA (Specialist, Major; joint program with Sheridan College); Cinema Studies, HBA (Major, Minor); Visual Culture & Communication, HBA (Specialist); Visual Culture, HBA (Minor); Certificate in Curatorial Studies.

On behalf of the University of Toronto Mississauga, we would first like to thank the reviewers, Matthew C. Hunter, McGill University, and Amy Villarejo, UCLA, for their very comprehensive review of the Department of Visual Studies and its programs. We would also like to thank the former Chair, Prof. Jill Caskey, and faculty, administrative staff, and all those who contributed to the preparation of the self-study. We also want to thank the many staff, students, and faculty members who met with the external reviewers and provided thoughtful feedback.

Overall, the reviewers commended the exceptional research profile of the faculty of the Department, the steady and growing enrolments in the Department's programs, and the well-developed curricula of the programs. In their recommendations, reviewers stressed the importance of strengthening the relationship with Sheridan College, recommended new hires in fields such as Black Visual Culture and Latin American Art when opportunities permit, and discussed the potential for the growth of important features such as the Blackwood Gallery.

The reviewers' recommendations have been addressed in the enclosed Review Recommendations Table that outlines the Department's response, the Decanal response, and the Implementation Plan identifying action items and timelines for each recommendation (immediate, medium, or long term). This response was developed in consultation with the Department through a Town Hall held on June 5, 2024, and from a Chair's administrative response submitted by the Chair of the Department of Visual Studies, Brian Price.

Progress checks and monitoring of the implementation plan will occur through the Chair's Annual Report to the Dean. We also acknowledge your office will request a brief Interim Monitoring Report midway between the November 2023 review and the next cyclical review, which is scheduled to take place in the **2030-31** academic year.

Sincerely,



Nicholas Rule
Vice-Principal, Academic & Dean

Encl.: 2023-24 UTQAP Review of the UTM Department of Visual Studies – Review
Recommendations (table)

CC: Brian Price, Chair, Department of Visual Studies, University of Toronto Mississauga
Bryan Stewart, Vice-Dean, Academic Programs, University of Toronto Mississauga
Ferzeen Sammy, Manager, Academic Programs, Reviews & Quality Assurance, University
of Toronto Mississauga
Tatevik Nersisyan, Research Analyst, Academic Programs & Reviews, University of Toronto
Mississauga

2023-24 UTQAP Review of the UTM Department of Visual Studies - Review Recommendations

Please do the following for each recommendation in the table:

- If you **intend** to act on a recommendation, please provide an **Implementation Plan** identifying actions to be taken, the time frame (immediate, medium, long term) for each, and who will take the lead in each area. If appropriate, please identify any necessary changes in organization, policy or governance; and any resources, financial and otherwise, that will be provided, and who will provide them.
- If you **do not** intend to act on a recommendation, please briefly explain why the actions recommended have not been prioritized.
- In accordance with the UTQAP and Ontario's Quality Assurance Framework, "it is important to note that, while the external reviewers' report may include **commentary** on issues such as faculty complement and/or space requirements when related to the quality of the program under review, **recommendations** on these or any other elements that are within the purview of the university's internal budgetary decision-making processes must be tied directly to issues of program quality or sustainability" (emphasis added)
- You may wish to refer to the [sample table](#) provided by the Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs

Request Prompt <i>verbatim from the request</i>	Rec. #	Recommendations from Review Report <i>verbatim from the review report</i>	Unit Response	Dean's Response	Implementation Plan <i>Timeline: immediate (six months to 1 year), medium (1 to 3 years) and long (4 to 7 years) terms. Lead (e.g. Program Director, Dean)</i>
The reviewers echoed the department's concerns regarding the sustainability of the Specialist track in Visual Culture and Communication. They recommend that DVS carefully consider appropriate future directions for the program, including exploring the possibility of closure.	1	"Rather than additions of work proposed in the self-study, we recommend some subtractions. These include the Specialist track in Visual Culture and Communication (VCC)...Although growth in the program is noted, the enrollment numbers remain tiny. We agree with the self-study's assessment that 'charging deregulated tuition, relying on Sessional Instructors to teach up to 78% of the courses and up to 86% of the students (in 2021-22) is as risky as it is problematic.' In league with the 2016 reviewers, we recommend that this program be closed."	We have struck a Curriculum Committee to examine this issue and plan to decide about the program in 2024–25. While the Specialist is indeed tiny, Visual Culture is a strong and popular stream in DVS and closing the Specialist could negatively impact many students and the department. For these reasons, in departmental meetings and in the recent Town Hall consultation, we discussed the possibility of shifting the Specialist to a Major and redefining the Major to foreground DVS faculty priorities and expertise. Implementation of any substantive changes, including a potential closure, would begin in 2025–26.	The OVPAD supports the Department's consideration of options for the Visual Culture and Communication Stream. The Vice-Dean, Academic Programs and the Program and Curriculum Unit (PCU) are available support the unit with a potential program closure or curriculum modification.	Medium-term (1-2 years) Unit anticipates possibly shifting the Specialist to a Major and redefining the Major to foreground DVS faculty priorities and expertise. To be Implemented by the Unit by 2025-26. (Dept Chair)
The reviewers observed that international enrolment	2	"By far the most pressing issue is the changing nature of the	We have worked seriously and consistently on the pedagogical challenges posed by	The Department added ISP100H5 Writing for University and Beyond	Immediate (6-12 months):

<p>in DVS programs has doubled since the previous review, and noted that “a comprehensive reckoning with UTM’s changing student demographic” could present a key long-range planning opportunity for the department. They highlighted the engagement of Sheridan instructors with English Language Learner (ELL) students as exemplary, and encouraged DVS faculty to engage with Sheridan to inform their own approaches to formulating techniques, best practices, and potentially providing leadership on issues related to ELL students across UTM.</p>		<p>undergraduate student body toward international students. These changes affect DVS – affect the university faculty, students, and staff – in multiple ways, as we reiterate in our final section (5) in what follows, as we urge DVS to take university-wide leadership in innovative teaching and research involving international students.”</p>	<p>current student demographics, and indeed have had meetings with our Sheridan colleagues about them. For several years, we hired through the Work-Study program English Language Learner Peer Advisors, who offered mentoring on both campuses. While initially successful, students stopped taking advantage of this opportunity during and after the pandemic; we continued to run it as partly in-person and partly online for two more years, but so few students sought out the Advisors that the program ended in 2023.</p> <p>We also offered additional, voluntary ELL Tutorials in many of our first- and second-year courses. These tutorials gave students additional discipline-specific language practice and training while offering consistent participants extra credit points. This program was difficult to run, however, since the TAs who taught the tutorials are not trained in ELL pedagogy. Coordinating with the asynchronous PELS program helped in one of the first-year courses, but overall, it was not clear that the additional tutorials were leading to real learning outcomes. They have been phased out for pedagogical and budgetary reasons.</p> <p>Our disciplines in DVS are historical, theoretical, and critical at their core, and we would be remiss if we did not help students develop their skills in reading, writing, and oral communication in complement with visual expression and creativity. Tellingly, at the Annual Dinner with DVS Alumni in the Arts this spring, every speaker—a practicing artist, curator, fashion designer, graphic designer, museum educator, and studio art professor—said that DVS’s greatest contribution to their success was our emphasis on writing. As a Humanities</p>	<p>as a completion requirement for Specialists and Majors in 2021-22; however, as of 2024-25 the Department has made this course a program entry requirement. This will benefit all students in the programs by ensuring they have foundational skills needed to progress in the program.</p> <p>The Office of the Vice-Principal, Academic and Dean (OVPAD) is currently engaged in consultations with partners at Sheridan College to renew and update the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the Joint Programs offered with UTM and Sheridan. The revised MOU will be developed in 2024-25 and include provisions for regular meetings of UTM and Sheridan proponents, to review curriculum and issues raised for Joint Programs. We will review potential directions for language instruction in these consultations and support DVS in their continued relationship with Sheridan partners.</p> <p>Using dashboards and available data, the institutional data team can support the Department with detailed enrolment data. Vice-Dean, Undergraduate can facilitate conversations with the Department to understand their enrolment and better support student success.</p> <p>The Vice-Dean Undergraduate is available to consult with the</p>	<p>The Department of Visual Studies plans to develop a schedule of more regular meetings with Sheridan colleagues in 2024-25 to discuss key issues undermining student success. (Dept Chair)</p> <p>Medium-term (3-4 years): The Vice-Dean, Undergraduate will consult with the Department Chair on the implementation of ISP100H5. (Dept Chair and Vice-Dean, Undergraduate)</p>
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			department, this remains an important aspect of the curriculum.	Department on the impact of this program change and supporting students with writing.	
	3	<p>“We urge a more capacious, generous approach. In part, this recommendation is based upon the attitude and tactics we witnessed among studio instructors at Sheridan. Asked to speak to concerns voiced at UTM around the challenges of working with ELL students, the Sheridan group offered a number of thoughtful suggestions. They expressed willingness to meet the students where they are. Better, they were open to revising their own preconceptions about how education should go and what it needs to do so as to draw on the strengths of their diverse, increasingly international student population.”</p>	<p>Creative and conceptual assignments are offered in many courses, particularly at the 100 and 200 levels; examples of these include making copies of paintings studied in class and designing contemporary versions of medieval political iconography. We regret that the External Examiners did not have the opportunity to view the full range of assessments that DVS instructors have developed, assessments which we feel seek to “meet students where they are.”</p> <p>In the past, we have discussed whether to include more of these kinds of assessments in more courses. DVS’s programs have aimed to balance the creative or visual and the written or critical. However, it is also important to give students opportunities to develop their writing and oral communication skills; they need to be able to write research papers, particularly if they are interested in graduate studies. More frequent and focused discussions with our Sheridan colleagues about the key issues undermining student success (e.g., literacy skills, mental health, academic integrity) would be beneficial to faculty and students. In 2024–25, we will develop a schedule of more regular meetings with our Sheridan colleagues.</p>		
	4	<p>“Countering the gravitation of its intellectual life toward the St. George campus, we recommend that DVS work together to formulate techniques and best practices for critical thinking/sensing/being beyond text. An integrative, long-range endeavor, this project would marshal the department’s conspicuous strengths and</p>	<p>After discussing this recommendation in departmental meetings and the Town Hall consultation, the department has concluded that a new introductory course would not work in our institutional and departmental context. Such a course would require a museum or collection to serve as the focus, and this is not available on campus. DVS did offer for several years a similar course, VST101H5 (Introduction to Visual Studies). It was last offered in 2014 and was eventually</p>		

		<p>expertise to provide leadership on issues clearly being felt all across UTM and beyond. Despite the heavy workload sketched above, we feel that energy should be devoted to developing a framework course aimed at introductory students that would reconsider—better, challenge—the remedial treatment of ELL students currently on offer.”</p>	<p>retired in 2021 because the logistical challenges far outweighed its pedagogical benefits. In its wake we emphasized three discipline-specific survey courses: FAH101H5 (Intro to Art History), CIN101H5 (Intro to Cinema Studies), and VCC101H5 (Intro to Visual Culture and Communication). These have provided well-scaffolded, productive gateways to our program areas.</p> <p>To meet the needs of introductory writing instruction, all Specialists and Majors in DVS are required to take ISP100H5 (Writing for University and Beyond). We were one of the first departments to adopt the requirement. While we do not administer this course, it complements the above disciplinary introductory courses in first year.</p>		
<p>Noting potential upcoming faculty retirements, as well as challenges related to the recruitment of junior faculty due to the high cost of living in the GTA, the reviewers emphasized the importance of strategic complement planning, and the need to ensure sufficient faculty supports and benefits across UTM and U of T. They endorsed the unit’s desire to prioritize hiring in the research area of Black Visual Culture when opportunities permit.</p>	5	<p>“Nonetheless, costs of living and real estate in Toronto have risen sharply recently, making recruitment of junior faculty a significant barrier to excellence; here, we would simply note the need to continue to attend to providing sufficient faculty housing and benefits systemwide to provide DVS with the opportunity to continue to thrive through anticipated faculty turnover due to retirements (discussed below).”</p>	<p>The spate of faculty retirements on the (near) horizon will most affect the Art History and Art & Art History programs. Because these are our largest programs, we have begun strategizing about bolstering faculty complement in this area. Our complement request in 2023–2024 included a proposal for a position in Latin American art and architecture, a field which is dynamic, poorly represented in Canada, and often requested by students.</p> <p>Unfortunately, DVS cannot mitigate the high cost of living/housing in the GTHA. The university’s recent efforts to do so is an important step in the right direction. When we receive the go-ahead for our next search, we will ensure that candidates know about the supports available to them on both campuses.</p>	<p>The Department may proceed through the faculty complement planning process to request new faculty positions. In this process, the Department’s request will be considered alongside all other units’ requests for new positions and are assessed based on criteria set by the OVPAD complement planning committee and available campus budget allocation for new faculty searches. The Department may submit a request for consideration through this process.</p> <p>The OVPAD received requests for over 40 faculty positions and only 10 were approved. We encourage the Department to consider resubmitting as part of the next complement planning cycle in Winter 2025.</p>	<p>Implemented: The Department of Visual Studies submitted a faculty complement request in the 2023-24 complement planning cycle for a position in Latin American art and architecture.</p> <p>Implemented: As of 2024, the University of Toronto has partnered with the Bank of Montreal (BMO) to create a New Housing Loan Assistance Program for full-time U of T faculty and librarians. This custom home financing program aims to help faculty members and librarians achieve homeownership of a principal residence.</p>

	6	<p>“Doing so would open the field for the proposed hire of an assistant professor in Black Visual Culture, a move we endorse heartily. The rationale for it is clear. As the self-study puts it: ‘No faculty member specializes in the arts, cinema, or visual cultures of Africa or the African diaspora, huge and multi-faceted areas of study that tend to be neglected across the University of Toronto.’ Unburdened by the expectation that this new colleague would need to take on the administrative task of stabilizing the VCC program, the projected hire should be encouraged to teach wherever their expertise fits best within DVS and neighboring departments.”</p>	<p>We have requested a position in Black Visual Culture in the complement planning cycle of 2023–24. At the time of writing, UTM complement planning decisions have not been shared with departments. We will continue to request this position every year until it is filled.</p> <p>We agree that a newly hired Assistant Professor should not be given the task of stabilizing or re-envisioning the VCC program, and that someone hired in Black Visual Culture should be able to teach in their area(s) of expertise. We do think that a new hire in this or another area should have a voice in shaping DVS’s programs.</p>		<p>Ongoing: The Department of Visual Studies submitted a faculty complement request in the 2023-24 complement planning cycle for a position in Black Visual Culture and plans to continue requesting this position until it is filled. (Dept Chair)</p>
Observing that some DVS faculty are approaching tenure evaluation, the reviewers stressed the importance of working with divisional and central administration to ensure that members’ creative professional activities, and “values of collaborative, community-facing work” are appropriately considered during the evaluation process, to support their success (in developing your response you are encouraged to consult with the Office of the Vice-Provost, Faculty and Academic Life).	7	<p>“We recommend that DVS leads on serious revision to the ‘creative professional activity’ document, and that the values of collaborative, community-facing work exemplified in the department feature prominently in it.”</p>	<p>We are willing and eager to contribute to discussions and consultations about these issues and policy documents related to it.</p>	<p>The OVPAD Academic HR unit will continue to provide workshops for Chairs/Directors and faculty on the tenure process. The Vice-Dean, Faculty will support the Department in its efforts to incorporate assessment and consideration of professional creative activities.</p>	<p>Ongoing. (Vice-Dean, Faculty)</p>

<p>The reviewers observed significant tensions related to DVS's contributions to the tri-campus graduate programs, and broadly noted opportunities to calibrate processes, enhance communications, and strengthen relationships in this area.</p>	8	<p>"...beyond the scope of our report though it is, service in U of T's tri-campus graduate programs weighs heavily on DVS; it is described as "fraught" in the self-study. Graduate supervision increases the pressure and stakes of grant-seeking; each of the eleven eligible DVS faculty are currently supervising an average of three doctoral dissertations and serving on roughly four PhD committees, while also contributing one seminar per year to the tri-campus graduate programs."</p>	<p>The major impasse has been with the Graduate Department of Art History. We are optimistic that the new Chair of DVS and new Director of Graduate Studies in Art History can help the Chair of the Graduate Department of Art History ease the tensions and resolve the issues that have been most vexing, which concern equity and representation in departmental decision-making. Implementation: MOA to be signed in 2024-25; structural problems addressed in 2024-25 and 2025-26 (e.g., TA hiring; committee membership).</p>	<p>The Vice-Dean Academic Programs will support the Department through these negotiations.</p>	<p>Immediate (6 months-1 year): MOA with School of Graduate Studies to be signed in 2024-25. (Vice-Dean, Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs)</p> <p>Medium-term (1-2 years): Structural problems like TA hiring and committee membership to be addressed in 2024-25 and 2025-26. (Dept Chair)</p>
<p>The reviewers highlighted critical concerns regarding the relationship between UTM and Sheridan College, observing that the joint program with DVS faces "existential threat", and the contributing faculty complement at Sheridan has "atrophied". They strongly urged UTM leadership to engage in direct, high-level conversation with senior administration at Sheridan regarding the sustainability and future of this partnership.</p>	9	<p>"Messages are mixed about prospects for the MOA's renewal; no clear lines of communication at the executive levels needed to secure agreement appear active. The stakes of this impasse register clearly to DVS: were A&AH programs 'to fail due to Sheridan's lack of investment in faculty to run them, DVS would be in serious trouble,' as the self-study observes. And again: 'It is our view that we are at a moment of crisis that demands the attention of the UTM and Sheridan administrations.' We agree. So much so that, during our site visit, we requested and obtained a meeting with UTM's Vice-Principal Academic & Dean. In that meeting, we underscored the gravity of the situation and stressed the need for direct, high-level talks with Sheridan's recently appointed Dean (the fourth to hold that office in the last two and a half years) to generate swift, decisive action."</p>	<p>The situation at Sheridan has developed since the review. Fortunately, two faculty members who previously taught in Sheridan's ICCIT stream have now moved into Art & Art History. This has strengthened the program. However, it is not yet clear if either will manage the Sheridan side of the program when the current, long-standing director retires. Unfortunately, Provincially-mandated caps on international student enrolment have affected Sheridan's enrolment. The Chair of DVS will work with the OVPAD and the Sheridan Dean on these and related planning matters in 2024-25.</p>	<p>As noted above, the OVPAD will be developing a revised MOU for the Joint Programs with Sheridan in 2024-25. These discussions have been positive and there is a shared good will towards establishing a successful and stable working relationship between the two institutions.</p>	<p>Implemented: Two faculty members who previously taught in Sheridan's ICCIT stream have now moved into Art & Art History program.</p> <p>Immediate (6 months –1 year): The Chair of the Department of Visual Studies will work with the Office of the Vice-Principal, Academic and Dean, and the Sheridan Dean on these and related planning matters in 2024-25. (Dept Chair)</p>

<p>Highlighting concerns that the infrastructural instability of the Blackwood Gallery is negatively impacting DVS faculty and student morale, the reviewers urged UTM leadership to prioritize efforts to assess and advance the Gallery's needs. In their discussion of space, they also noted concerns about the absence of a screening facility to support Cinema and Media Studies education.</p>	10	<p>"Given the extent to which the gallery is now ribboned through the pedagogical offerings and culture of DVS, we urge UTM's leadership to work concertedly to advance the Blackwood's needs. As was astutely recognized by the prior reviewers, the Blackwood at its best acts as fulcrum for DVS, UTM and larger Mississauga communities. To continue growing that important work, the gallery needs to be housed in a space appropriate to its ambitious goals. We also recommend that the approved hiring line for an Associate Director be opened as quickly as possible to ensure continuity of this centripetal force of relationship-building within and far beyond DVS."</p>	<p>We will continue to request the new position of Associate Director of the Blackwood Gallery, a position which was approved and then received OTO funding for 2 years in 2023. This funding had to be redirected unexpectedly to Blackwood programming in 2024. The need for the position has become increasingly urgent. We will request it again in 2024–25.</p> <p>We will continue to lobby for appropriate exhibition and office space for the Blackwood Gallery.</p>	OVPAD recommends the Department submit request through the MCAPS process.	<p>Medium term (1 to 2 years). (Dept Chair)</p>
	11	<p>"A related issue is the need for a designated screening facility to support education in Cinema and Media Studies... We believe that, in the first instance, the requests of the CIN faculty are actually quite modest: reliable DVD players connected to extant projectors in lecture rooms used by many stakeholders. If a coalition of those faculty members, IT specialists, administrative leaders, and student workers could support this – let us call it Phase I of a projection/exhibition plan, faculty leaders in the department could work on a more durable solution with higher ambitions for the future, as cinema and media studies represents a growth area for the department and university."</p>	<p>In 2023–24, we worked closely with the Vice-Dean of Teaching and Learning to plan upgrades to one large classroom. Before the previous review in 2016, the Department Chair had purchased a projector suitable for screening films in that room and invested in lighting as well; the projector is now obsolete, and beyond repair. We have been exploring new projectors for the room and have, for 2024-25, booked all Cinema Studies courses and screenings and all FAH courses of appropriate size in that room. Implementation of the better projector and, presumably, a desktop that has the capacity to maximize the projector's effectiveness, play DVDs, and stream films is targeted for September 2025.</p>		<p>Implemented and ongoing: In 2023-24, the Department of Visual Studies has worked with the Office of the Vice-Principal, Academic and Dean, to repurpose a classroom into a screening room. For 2024-25, all Cinema Studies courses and screenings for Fine Art History courses have been scheduled to take place in this classroom. Implementation of projector and desktop is scheduled to take place in September 2025. (Dept Chair)</p>

3 Committee on Academic Policy & Programs (AP&P) Findings

The spokesperson for the reading group reported that the review summary had accurately reflected the full review, and that the Dean's administrative response fully addressed the issues identified. While the administrative response covered most of the pertinent issues, the group requested further explanation of the issues regarding what additional support mechanisms the department plans to implement for a more comprehensive approach to English Language Learner (ELL) student success.

Nick Rule, Vice-Principal (Academic) & Dean, University of Toronto Mississauga, responded that they had seen tremendous growth over the past several years, particularly with English Language Learners (ELL) and that the GPAs of these students had remained stable, suggesting that students were not struggling very much, and that this may have been a minor misperception with the external reviewers. The introduction of ISP 100, a first year foundational course on writing, was expected to help students and to enhance their foundational writing skills. He explained that some of the programs were not likely not as well solicited as they had hoped, so it made sense to phase those programs out and direct students towards some of the broader campus-wide resources that had been successful in other academic units. This included the Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre which offered specific programming, such as On-Demand workshops, and drop-in appointments. Dean Rule hoped that these resources would benefit the students in Visual Studies that were experiencing a harder time with English, and that the administration would help connect those students with those resources.

No follow-up report was requested.

4 Institutional Executive Summary

The reviewers praised the Department of Visual Studies (DVS) as “exceptional”, with faculty whose research and creative work place them among the best in North America and beyond. The programs constitute a robust curriculum for addressing historical and emergent issues in visual culture, and the articulation of course sequencing is impressive and lucid. The department is “healthy and thriving” with enrolments generally trending upwards, and students noting remarkable satisfaction with courses at both UTM and at Sheridan College. DVS has made extremely strong hires in Indigenous Art and Performance, Islamic Art, and East Asian Cinema and Media since the previous review, and faculty demonstrate consistent success in winning SSHRC grants and other supports, and in their publication efforts. Overall, the reviewers emphasized that “this faculty represents the best of early twenty-first century arts and moving image educators.”

The reviewers recommended that the following issues be addressed: carefully considering appropriate future directions for the Specialist track in Visual Culture and Communication,

including the possibility of closure; engaging with Sheridan instructors to inform DVS's approaches to formulating techniques, best practices, and potentially providing leadership on issues related to English Language Learner students across UTM; engaging in strategic faculty complement planning, ensuring sufficient faculty supports and benefits across UTM and U of T, and prioritizing hiring in the research area of Black Visual Culture when opportunities permit; working with divisional and central administration to ensure that faculty members' creative professional activities, and "values of collaborative, community-facing work" are appropriately considered during the tenure evaluation process; calibrating processes, enhancing communications, and strengthening relationships across relevant tri-campus graduate programs; having UTM leadership engage in direct, high-level conversation with senior administration at Sheridan regarding the sustainability and future of their partnership; prioritizing efforts to assess and advance the Blackwood Gallery's needs; and exploring the possibility of a screening facility to support Cinema and Media Studies education.

The Dean's Administrative Response describes the division and unit's responses to the reviewers' recommendations, including an implementation plan for any changes necessary as a result.

5 Monitoring and Date of Next Review

Progress checks and monitoring of the implementation plan will occur through the Chair's Annual Report to the Dean. The next external review of the Department of Visual Studies will be commissioned to take place in 2030-2031.

The Dean will provide an interim report to the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs no later than Fall 2027 on the status of the implementation plans.

6 Distribution

On August 15th 2025, the Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan was posted to the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs website and the link provided by email to the Vice-Principal Academic & Dean, University of Toronto Mississauga, the Secretaries of AP&P, Academic Board and Governing Council, and the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance. The Dean provided the link to unit leadership.