

FACULTY OF ARTS/ Department of Communication, Media and Film

2024 Curriculum Review Report

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Executive Summary

Curriculum review of programs is a mandated process at the University of Calgary with the aim of ensuring that identified program-level outcomes are effectively realized through program requirements, curriculum, and courses. In Fall 2022, the Department of Communication, Media and Film embarked on a curriculum review for its degree programs in Communication and Media Studies (COMS) and in Film Studies (FILM). This report outlines the scope, research methods and activities, timeline, and findings from the curriculum review as well as the recommendations and action plan flowing from the review.

This report presents the scope, methods, timeline, findings, and subsequent recommendations and action plan from this review. The review was conducted in the context of program enrollments, faculty complement, and competition for prospective students. Department members collaboratively developed five guiding questions focused on program purpose, student experience, equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), experiential learning, and student writing skills. Course offerings, prerequisites, and program requirements were also assessed to identify areas for improvement.

Faculty research expertise informs both the core curriculum and special topics offerings of the CMF programs. Strengths of CMF include the critical analysis of mediated identities (via feminist, critical race, and queer frameworks), visual culture and media (notably the critical analysis of photography and visual culture studies), the politics of big tech (i.e., examination of the economic, social, and political implications of media concentration), and the study and implementation of inclusive pedagogies. CMF is a hub of critical and feminist media studies. As well, rhetorical communication is a strong cluster and other courses that set it apart from other Communications/Film programs are the regularly offered Spain Group Study Program, an experiential learning opportunity for students as well as the focus on environmental communication.

In addition to online research and review of key documents, research for the curriculum review included the development and administration of faculty, student, and alumni surveys for each of our Major programs. These surveys were administered and analyzed with the assistance of a research assistant hired for 12 weeks in winter 2023 and spring 2023 with department funding in the form of a 0.5 GANT. Surveys for current CMF students, alumni, and faculty were administered using Google Forms in spring 2023.

- A total of 90 current and former CMF students completed the surveys (66 current students and 24 graduated students).
- A total of 14 full-time CMF faculty members completed the survey. No sessional instructors elected to respond to the survey.
- A total of 70 CMF specific courses were mapped using the Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning's Curriculum Links tool.

- Sixteen faculty members participated in the mapping, with several instructors mapping multiple courses. In circumstances where multiple faculty members taught the same course, all instructors were asked to map the course using their own course learning objectives (CLOs).

Overview of findings

Key findings from an analysis of the data revealed that CMF's required courses are aligned with the Program Level Outcomes (PLOs) for both the COMS and FILM programs. The existing set of PLOs remain relevant and require no substantive change from the previous curriculum review. For most courses skill development for course-based objectives follows a logical trajectory from Introducing Skills to Developing Skills to Advancing Skills with only a few outlier courses not following this same trajectory. Results showed that CMF's required courses align with Program-Level Outcomes (PLOs) for COMS and FILM programs, and most courses follow a logical skill-development trajectory.

When asked, surveyed students suggested that the strengths of CMF include the knowledgeable professors and the learning of critical thinking skills. They also indicated that the variety of courses was a strength and like students' responses in the 2017 curriculum review, the 2023 surveyed students also expressed that the professional communication courses like COMS 369, 363 and 383 were seen as important by providing them with practical and professional skills. The National Survey of Student Experience scores also indicate strong teaching practices compared to the rest of the Faculty of Arts. Once students graduate, they apply their CMF experience to several different careers and practices. CMF alumni reported working in various fields, with the most common being marketing, law, education (post-secondary), communications, and non-profit work. Other, less common fields include social media, public relations, activism, financial services, fine arts, hospitality, and information technology. Specific careers include marketing coordinator and/or specialist, industry relations coordinator, recruiter and communications and media officer.

The review also identified challenges for EDI students and students from equity-seeking groups reported several obstacles to their learning, including marginalization and biases from faculty and peers, microaggressions, and financial, mental, social, language, and physical challenges. CMF faculty have made efforts to create inclusive curricula by integrating diverse perspectives and using varied pedagogical strategies to support all learners. The decolonization of course design was also a significant topic of discussion among faculty.

One recommendation from the 2017 Curriculum Review that was not fully addressed was the need to strengthen undergraduate students' academic writing skills. This issue was revisited in the 2023 curriculum review, and the course mapping exercise highlights a focus on writing skill development in both course design and program-level learning outcomes. However, insights from the faculty survey reveal gaps in students' writing skills that may require more targeted approaches to enhance writing alongside research and knowledge-creation skills.

Overview of Recommendations

CMF's curriculum review revealed that the CMF programs are successful in achieving program-level outcomes, with strong alignment between required courses and key objectives in both COMS and FILM programs. Faculty and student surveys indicated that critical thinking, knowledgeable instructors, and a wide variety of course offerings are key strengths. However, opportunities for improvement were identified in areas such as integrating generative AI technologies, enhancing experiential learning opportunities, and addressing equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) challenges faced by students. Additionally, writing skill development and course alignment with emerging industry trends were highlighted as areas for further enhancement.

Conclusion

This curriculum review demonstrates that CMF's program-level outcomes (PLOs) and course learning objectives are well-aligned with best practices for student learning and experience. CMF faculty are highly knowledgeable in the areas of Communication and Media Studies (COMS) and Film Studies (FILM), and actively employ strong pedagogical techniques to enhance classroom learning. They offer a diverse range of courses on engaging topics, providing students with a solid foundation in critical thinking. The review also offers practical recommendations to improve student experiences, address EDI challenges, and further strengthen CMF's distinctive contributions to media and communication studies.

Finally, the curriculum review resulted in recommendations to enhance writing instruction and support for students in the COMS program; to offer CMF instructors teaching development workshops on assignment design, writing instruction, and using group projects; and to encourage the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) efforts within the department. Opportunities for enhancing our department website, promotional materials, and communication of our curriculum review were also identified.

Recommendations and Action Plan

Below, recommendations from the curriculum review for Communication, Media and Film are summarized. Recommendations are grouped according to the guiding questions that framed this curriculum review. The curriculum review identified a total of 32 Action Items (Program Purpose = 9; Student Learning Experience = 7; EDI = 7; EL = 7; Writing Skills = 2).

Recommendations

Program Purpose

- Revise existing PLOs or add new PLO to address impact of generative AI technologies.
- Review and update the Film Studies program's structure, curricular content, and course sequencing to enhance student learning throughout the degree
- Revise COMS 363 and COMS 383 course objectives to align with existing program level objectives, especially those objectives related to the critical thinking and practice

Amplify transdisciplinarity connections between COMS and FILM programs along with other ARTS departments

Review and strengthen curricular “pathways” in sub-fields of study to enhance student learning moving through the program (notably, COMS 313 & 413)

- Identify courses that are no longer supported by faculty expertise and could be removed from the program
- Review the required course, CMCL 305 (Modernity), to determine whether it could (or should) be more aligned with a COMS focus
- Revise CMF website to increase its ease-of-use for site visitors based on analysis of CMF website engagement data. Highlight events, student and faculty achievements, engaging faculty teaching/research profiles, and key areas of teaching and research focus

Develop *sustainable* CMF social media strategy based on existing resources

Student Learning Experience

- Pursue funding avenues to create a student maker space and/or screening venue to support EL initiatives and bring COMS and FILM up to the level of other similar programs at UCalgary and other Canadian COMS/FILM programs.

- Update the Internet Research Studio in conjunction with plans to create a multi-media digital lab housed in CMF. The goal is to create a hub for the various research and teaching initiatives that faculty are developing.
- Create an ongoing communication mechanism with our graduates and activate our alumni pool to mentor current students around career readiness and experience.
- Support pre-tenure faculty's development of their teaching dossiers with teaching observations and peer review.
- Dedicate departmental funds to support undergraduate **(and graduate)** knowledge mobilization activities (ex. conference/travel).
- Develop coherent event promotion strategy to increase student participation in CMF talks and lectures.
- Create a SoTL Community of Practice that recognizes and supports the teaching excellence in CMF.

Equity Diversity and Inclusion

- Formalize a culture of EDI in the department through initiatives that recognize student agency. Examples: involving students in the department sponsored annual Race & Media talk; formalizing student roles on the EDI in CMF Committee.
- Develop and implement a strategy to recruit, support, and mentor equity-deserving students in the department.
- When developing new faculty positions in CMF, collaborate with the Institutional Commitments Unit (formerly OEDI) in our recruitment and hiring processes to increase BIPOC faculty in CMF.
- Offer faculty support to learn more about how to include EDI in their courses by adding interdepartmental communication of campus-wide instructional supports, and by bringing in Educational Design Consultants in EDI and Indigenous Engagement from the Taylor Institute.
- Revise the EDI Committee's terms of reference to incorporate a Graduate Student representative/ collaborator and undergraduate student representatives.
- Communicating to students existing wellness and academic supports at the start of each course (inclusive of campus, off-campus, and Indigenous-led supports).
- Develop ways in which students can safely offer feedback within the department on issues of equity and inclusion.

Experiential Learning (EL)

- Grow and sustain Undergraduate Research initiatives like PURE awards and the Motley journal.
- Organize workshops for students to learn how to edit and review research papers and conference proposals.
- Initiate themed conversations around Experiential Learning practices and assessment via a department SoTL CoP
- Provide more support for Community Engaged Learning in COMS courses with scheduling and reallocation of Tutorial Assistants.
- Develop a departmental skills articulation initiative to help students understand and communicate the transferable skills they are learning with EL activities.
- Design and embed Small EL activities in first year and senior level courses.
- Track and map the critical reflection happening in courses that have an EL component.

Writing Skills

- Among the faculty we have strong support for the creation of a first-year critical thinking and writing course that includes Indigenous ways of knowing and AI/Academic Integrity that speaks to critical thinking skills associated with COMS and FILM (Examples: GNST 201 First Year Seminar, ACWR).
- Map out the scaffolding of writing skills through course progression in the program by focusing first on required courses.

Action Plan

Below, the 32 recommendations from the curriculum review for Communication, Media and Film are listed alongside the timeframe for implementation and faculty/admin leads. As individual action items progress, the leads will update the chart below in the “status” column.

In the chart below, position acronyms are as follows:

- DH = Department Head
- UPD = Director of Undergraduate Programs
- CPC = Communication and Media Studies Program Coordinator
- FPC = Film Studies Program Coordinator
- HPC = Honours Program Coordinator
- IOR = Instructor(s) of Record

Figure 1. CMF Action Plan for Implementation

Guiding Question	Lead(s)	Start date	Status
Program Purpose			
Revise existing PLOs or add new PLO to address impact of generative AI technologies.	UPD, UPC	Fall 2024	
Review and update the Film Studies program's structure, curricular content, and course sequencing to enhance student learning throughout the degree	UPD + FPC, UPC	Winter 2025	
Revise COMS 363 and COMS 383 course objectives to align with existing program level objectives, especially those objectives related to the critical thinking and practice	UPD & IOR COMS 363, then UPC	Winter 2024	
Amplify transdisciplinarity connections between COMS and FILM programs along with other ARTS departments	UPD, UPC	Fall 2025	
Review and strengthen curricular “pathways” in sub-fields of study to enhance student learning moving through the program (notably, COMS 313 & 413)	UPD, UPC		
Identify courses that are no longer supported by faculty expertise and could be removed from the program	UPD + UPC		
Review the required course, CMCL 305 (Modernity), to determine whether it could (or should) be more aligned with a COMS focus	UPD, UPC, IOR	Winter 2025	
Revise CMF website to increase its ease-of-use for site visitors based on analysis of CMF website engagement data.	DH, FoA Coms	Winter 2025	
Develop sustainable CMF social media strategy based on existing resources.	DH, FoA Coms, Pod Staff	Winter 2025	
Student Learning Experience			

Pursue funding avenues to create a student maker space and/or screening venue to support EL initiatives and bring COMS and FILM up to the level of other similar programs at UCalgary and other Canadian COMS/FILM programs.	DH + Media Space Working Group	Fall 2024	
Update the Internet Research Studio in conjunction with plans to create a multi-media digital lab housed in CMF.	DH + Media Space Working Group	Fall 2024	
Create an ongoing communication mechanism with our graduates and activate our alumni pool to mentor current students around career readiness and experience.	UPD, DH	Winter 2025	
Support pre-tenure faculty's development of their teaching dossiers with teaching observations and peer review.	DH + CMF SoTL community of practice	Winter 2025	
Dedicate existing departmental funds to support undergraduate (and graduate) knowledge mobilization activities (ex. conference/travel).	DH, UPD, HPC, Pod Manager	Spring/ Summer 2025	
Develop coherent event promotion strategy to increase student participation in CMF talks and lectures.	UPD, CPC + FPC, Speaker Event cmte	Winter 2025	
Create a SoTL Community of Practice that recognizes and supports the teaching excellence in CMF.	UPD + DH		
Equity, Diversity and Inclusion			
Formalize a culture of EDI in the department through initiatives that recognize student agency. Examples: involving students in the department sponsored annual Race & Media talk; formalizing student roles on the EDI in CMF Committee.	EDI in CMF Cmte Chairs		

Develop and implement a strategy to recruit, support, and mentor equity-deserving students in the department.	EDI in CMF Cmte Chairs + Arti		
When developing new faculty positions in CMF, collaborate with the Institutional Commitments Unit (formerly OEDI) in our recruitment and hiring processes to increase BIPOC faculty in CMF.	DH		
Offer faculty support to learn more about how to include EDI in their courses by adding interdepartmental communication of campus-wide instructional supports (ex. Educational Design Consultants in EDI and Indigenous Engagement from the Taylor Institute).	UPD + Pod (AA)		
Revise the EDI Committee's terms of reference to incorporate a Graduate Student representative/ collaborator and undergraduate student representatives.	EDI in CMF Cmte Chairs		
Communicating to students existing wellness and academic supports at the start of each course (inclusive of campus, off-campus, and Indigenous-led supports).	UPD + EDI in CMF Cmte Chairs		
Develop ways in which students can safely offer feedback within the department on issues of equity and inclusion.	EDI in CMF Cmte Chairs	Winter 2025	
Experiential Learning			
Grow and sustain Undergraduate Research initiatives like PURE Awards and The Motley journal.	Chair in COMS, HPC	Fall 2025	
Organize workshops for students to learn how to edit and review research papers and conference proposals.	UPD, CPC + FPC		
Initiate themed conversations around Experiential Learning practices and assessment via a department SoTL community of practice	UPD		

Provide more support for Community Engaged Learning in COMS courses with scheduling and reallocation of GATs.	UPD, GPD, DH, APS (Kristine)		
Develop a departmental skills articulation initiative to help students understand and communicate the transferable skills they are learning with EL activities.	UPD, UPC		
Design and embed Small EL activities in first year and senior level courses.	UPD, CPC + FPC		
Track and map the critical reflection happening in courses that have an EL component.	Lisa (EL Lead, TI), CPC/HPC	Winter 2025	
Writing Skills			
Develop a first-year Academic Essentials course to be taught by existing faculty members, which provides students with foundations in academic writing, reading, research, and critical thinking skills as well as genAI and academic integrity. This course could also introduce students to Indigenous ways of knowing. (Examples: GNST 201 First Year Seminar, ACWR 303)	UPD, UPC		
Map out the scaffolding of writing skills through course progression in the program by focusing first on required courses.	UPD		