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MEMORANDUM

ATTENTION Senate **DATE** April 27, 2023
FROM Kevin Oldknow, Senior Advisor on Academic Planning and Acting Chair, SCUP on behalf of Wade Parkhouse, Provost and Vice-President Academic **PAGES** 1/19 
RE: External Review Mid-Cycle Report for the School for the Contemporary Arts (SCUP 23-22)

At its meeting on April 12, 2023, SCUP reviewed the External Review Mid-Cycle Report for the School for the Contemporary Arts which resulted from its March 2019 External Review.

The following documents are attached for the information of Senate:

- Update on the Action Plan
- Assessment of Educational Goals
- SCUTL's feedback on the assessment of Educational Goals



To: Dr. Glynn Nicholls, Director, Academic Planning and Quality Assurance
From: Elspeth Pratt, Director, School for the Contemporary Arts
Re: SCA External Review Mid-Cycle Report
Date: November 1, 2022

Please find attached the Mid-Cycle Report for the School for the Contemporary Arts. As outlined in SCA's Educational Goals Assessment Action Plan we are submitting a report that is narrative in nature, outlining changes in the area's instruction or curriculum that have been developed to improve the educational experience of our students.

Please contact Elspeth Pratt at epratt@sfu.ca if you require further information.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elspeth Pratt".

External Review Mid-Cycle Report for the School for the Contemporary Arts

Action	Progress Made
1. Programming	
1.1 Action to be taken	
1.1.1 Undergraduate Program	
A) While maintaining the cohorts we wish to break down the barriers between cohorts and between disciplines.	Significant progress has been made. Music/Sound and Dance have revised their curriculum, changing prerequisites that allow students from all areas within SCA to enroll. Theatre/Performance and Production & Design are currently working on similar changes to their curriculum. Large cross area mainstage productions are bringing students from across the School to work together on productions.
B) Introduce community engaged/based art and scholarship as one of our core undergraduate courses required of all SCA majors. This will be undertaken in collaboration with Am Johal, Director of the Vancity Office of Community Engagement. The External Report recommends that the university allocate a CRC in Community-Based Arts, which would forge close connections with Johal's office and leverage the extensive community-based work already occurring under its auspices.	For the last two years, in collaboration with Am Johal, we have addressed this action by planning a day-long event for the entire School during the first week of classes in September. In 2021 we focused on a day of community thinking on race, art & practice. In 2022 the focus was on climate change + art. The programs have included invited speakers, panels, live podcasts, break-out groups, films, and a live performance. We were awarded our first CRC in Contemporary Indigenous Arts. We successfully recruited Suzanne Kite, who is an Oglala Lakota artist, composer, and scholar. Her artistic and academic research is interdisciplinary, Indigenous, and she is deeply interested in the development of ethical and community-engaged methodologies through art-making.
C) Develop community engaged/based art course to be offered by September 2021.	We have adopted an annual all-day event to effectively engage our students in community-based learning. We recognize this is not the creation of a course. Instead, we have found it more fruitful to enrich a number of courses with community engagement. Additionally, faculty regularly invite Am Johal, Director of SFU's Vancity Office of Community Engagement into their studio classes to address specific issues relevant to their curriculum.

<p>D) All areas within the School are preparing to review their curriculum once faculty renewal is substantially underway. We anticipate that this process will take 2 to 5 years given the degree of turnover in our faculty.</p>	<p>Music/Sound and the Dance area have completed this review and made substantial changes to their curriculum. Theatre/Performance and Production & Design are amid the process. They are consulting with UCIL to determine if they will be approved as an “existing” program or need to go to the Ministry under their Degree Determination process. Film is starting to look at their curriculum but will wait until their next hire has been completed.</p>
<p>E) We will take steps to streamline our degree paths and revise prerequisites. This work will have multiple benefits, including making room bookings and equipment allocations, student advising, and scheduling more efficient and ensuring consistency in course content and administrative matters when sessional instructors are hired.</p>	<p>We have revised many prerequisites and continue to work on this as areas are adapting their programs, courses, and requirements. We think we have completed 60% of this project. We have switched to Advisor Link which has helped to streamline advising and has improved efficiency in appointments (booking, discussion during the appointment, and follow-up emails).</p>
<p>F) Increase equipment/infrastructure budget to \$252,000 annually. Based on technology audits and studies, \$252,000 is needed yearly to enable the School to maintain equipment and to remain at the front of technological changes essential to research and teaching within the six studio areas within the School.</p>	<p>Discussion with our Dean and VP External did take place in Fall 2021. This continues to be an issue for the building, which the School shares with Goldcorp Production and Event Services, SFU Woodward’s Cultural Programs, SFU’s Vancity Office of Community Engagement and SFU Galleries, as the equipment purchased in 2010 is beginning to break down and the spaces need to be maintained. Funds have not been committed.</p>
<p>1.1.2 Graduate Program</p>	
<p>A) Pursue dedicated performance studio space for MFA Performance students both inside GCA and outside, increased access to space in GCA, including Studio D and T, increase technical support, improve studio resources at Alexander Centre.</p>	<p>The FCAT Dean was able to provide us with one-time funding to renovate the Graduate space at Alexander Centre. The studio spaces are significantly improved. The SCA Production committee is working to improve access to performance spaces for Graduate students. We still do not have a dedicated performance studio space for MFA Performance students. Changes have recently been made to our Technical Director’s job description which should allow him to be able to better support the Graduate students.</p>
<p>B) Act on plans to manage supervisory load towards increasing enrolment (MA in Contemporary Arts).</p>	<p>We have moved to a co-supervisory model of the MA Extended Essay (CA 829), and from a requirement of two essays to one for each student. This has significantly improved the distribution and management of</p>

	supervisory loads for the MA Program and has helped us maintain a consistent intake of 7-8 new MA candidates per year.
C) Submit the proposal for a PhD in Contemporary Arts to its next stage in the approval process this fall with anticipated admission of first cohort in 2021.	The PhD received final AVED Ministry Approval in May 2021, and we enrolled our first six PhD students September 2021, and another four students September 2022.
2. Research	
2.1 Action to be taken	
A) Work with FCAT, VPRI and IRP to develop metrics that represents our activities and includes all sources of funding.	In collaboration with the FCAT Associate Dean Research and the VPR Research Intelligence Office, a database was developed to capture research-creation in the SFU Research Expertise Engine, a tool designed to “connect SFU researchers to colleagues with similar interests, help researchers from other institutions find SFU researchers and SFU research works, [and] allow industry, government, partners and media to search for SFU scholars and research interests” (https://www.sfu.ca/research/research-expertise-engine). We recently learned that the research creations module is now live in REE and researchers can add in their research creations. No success with including all sources of funding as Canada Council funding is not funneled through ORS.
B) Work with VPA and VPRI to strengthen SCA's application for a CRC in Community Based Research.	On July 14, 2020, we were awarded a centrally held Tier 2 CRC in Indigenous Contemporary Arts. On October 14, 2022, the CRC and CFI were submitted to Ottawa.
3. Faculty Renewal	
3.1 Action to be taken	
A) Commit to long-term faculty renewal by FCAT and VPA.	The SCA Academic Renewal plan has assisted the School in determining new positions as retirements; vacancies have occurred as we understand what is needed to maintain the integrity and excellence of our graduate and undergraduate programs in the light of each area’s pedagogical priorities. Since 2019, nine faculty have retired or resigned. We have successfully hired new faculty to fill these lines. Six of the nine new faculty identify as BIPOC persons.

4. Administration 4.1 Action to be taken	
A) Consult with VPA and Dean Pro Term regarding our request for new position (Technical Production Coordinator 1FTE).	In August 2021, we successfully hired a Technical Production Coordinator. In November 2021, we hired an External Consultant to help us address the challenges we continue to face in supporting all the productions and events the School produces yearly. The report suggested that the duties for this position should change to include managing the overall production logistics for the School. We are currently in the process of changing this position to be Production Manager.
B) Increase the Communications Assistant from 0.6 to 1 FTE.	We did increase the Communications Assistant to 1 FTE; however, when we looked more closely at the School's needs, we received permission from the Dean to create a fulltime Communications Associate position as this position better describes the work needed by the School, a senior level Communications Associate who works independently, creates original content, and manages all levels and areas of communications, social media strategy and website management.
C) Professional Development Coordinator to be made a continuing appointment. WIL, FCAT and SCA to determine how to support this position.	WIL, FCAT and SCA are committed to making the 0.8 position continuing. On August 24, 2022, WIL committed to a 50/50 split with SCA.
5. Collaborative Vision for Goldcorp Centre for the Arts 5.1 Action to be taken	
A) The School recommends that the VPA, VP External, support the recommendation to move Cultural Unit back to VPA.	Starting in 2019, a thorough review that included all stakeholders in the Goldcorp Centre for the Arts, was led by FCAT Dean <i>pro tem</i> and Director of the Cultural Unit, Owen Underhill. Recommendations included creating a simpler reporting structure and enhancing and integrating academic, programming and operation support between the principal users. This will ensure that the structure and funding facilitates the principal users working together and supporting the collaborative vision. The name SFU Woodward's Cultural Unit and the position, Director of the Cultural Unit was phased out.

	<p>The Director of SCA, Director of GCA Production and Event Services, Director of SFU Vancity Community Engagement, Director of SFU Galleries, Director of SFU Woodward’s Cultural Programs have formed a GCA Advisory Committee to ensure balancing and sharing of the services between the various user groups and to collaboratively make decisions. The committee can enhance and integrate academic, programming and operation support between the five units.</p>
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Dean's Comments on the Mid-Cycle Report

I applaud the School for the Contemporary Arts on making significant and important strides in their work following the school's external review.

Undergraduate Program: I'm highly impressed with the SCA's work on their undergraduate program. They have performed important curricular changes to further interdisciplinarity and support linkages across their program areas. I commend faculty members on coming together in such a collegial fashion.

The school's 'Re-Orientation day' has been a large success and provided faculty and students with valuable opportunities to consider community-engaged art practices. Additional work to embed community-based learning in various courses is also highly noteworthy – I agree with the school's approach of embedding community-based learning in multiple courses rather than creating a single course.

I look forward to seeing the future pedagogical and student outcomes from streamlining the curriculum and improvements to room bookings, equipment allocations, student advising, and more.

The FCAT Dean's Office has provided funding for some equipment and infrastructure needs, yet I recognize the continued challenge facing the SCA in terms of needing further support. The reality is that appropriate equipment and infrastructure is a strong need for the SCA if we are to maintain the school and its programs at high standards. We are currently pursuing alternative revenue generation strategies that could help in this regard.

Graduate Program: The FCAT Dean's Office will continue to provide the SCA one-time funding for various infrastructure projects, however, budget constraints in the next few years will make this more challenging. As said, we are exploring alternative revenue generation strategies that could be used to support the SCA's infrastructure needs.

I am very excited that the SCA's PhD program is now approved and that two student cohorts are now working their way through the program. I look forward to seeing their continued progress and the effects of having a PhD program on the SCA and faculty members' research/artistic practice.

Research: The SCA has been awarded their very first CRC --- a Tier 2 in Indigenous Contemporary Arts by SFU --- a monumental achievement!

The recognition of artistic works and art-based grants within SFU's metrics and the Research Expertise Engine continues to be an ongoing challenge for the SCA and FCAT as a whole. This means that large volumes of grant money being awarded to SCA faculty is not counted within the data presented by IRP. Moreover, when users search in the Research Expertise Engine for SCA faculty, their research productivity appears to be minimal, despite having a wealth of scholarly output in forms other than those tracked by Scopus.

Faculty Renewal: I applaud the SCA's efforts in recruiting and hiring a large volume of BIPOC faculty members --- all have made strong additions to the school already through their teaching and artistic practices. The FCAT Dean's Office will continue in its commitment to faculty renewal within the school.

Administration: We are continuing to support new staff positions in the SCA, as permitted given budgetary constraints. This is critical given the nature of the SCA's teaching, programming, and event productions. The unit still faces significant challenges relating to IT support in the Goldcorp building that we hope can be resolved in the near future.

Collaborative Vision for Goldcorp Centre for the Arts: Important changes were made to staffing and structures within the Cultural Unit – I thank former FCAT Dean *pro tem*, Owen Underhill, for his leadership. The new GCA Advisory Committee plays a pivotal role in moving the centre forward and brings additional collegiality and direction.

Dean's Signature

Date



Oct 31, 2022

School for the Contemporary Arts - Educational Goals Mid-Cycle Review

The School for the Contemporary Arts (SCA) has begun a process of dramatic academic renewal and invigoration of research programs and work across disciplines.

Since the last external review, seven faculty have retired and two have resigned. We have hired nine new faculty, adding diversity to our faculty complement. Alongside the hiring, two of seven areas have completed a thorough curricular revision and three others are currently in the process of changing their pedagogical focus. All areas are changing prerequisites to allow greater access to their disciplinary training.

This reporting period does include the beginning of the pandemic and subsequent years. The School for the Contemporary Arts is particularly proud of their faculty, staff and students, who together enabled in-person teaching and maintained a safe environment. By spring 2021, 30% of our classes had returned to in-person teaching within specific limitations: 32 hours in-person teaching per student and distancing requirements in the studios. The School embraced the challenges and continued to present the large number of productions we produce annually by transitioning from live performances to filmed and video presentations. We did manage to install the 3rd, 4th year, and two MFA exhibitions in the Audain Gallery with stringent viewing regulations in place. Many memorable online visitors' series were hosted by SCA during the pandemic, allowing our students direct interaction with leading international artists and theorists across the disciplines.

The work of the SCA Professional Development Program Coordinator, who leads the development and implementation of undergraduate and graduate career programming, curriculum, workshops, and support services, has dramatically increased the skills our students leave with after graduation. During this reporting period they have connected many SCA students with possible career related opportunities through curricular arts internships, practicums and field placements and have created and delivered professional skill development programs and initiatives.

We continue to offer broad-ranging curricular choice to our students and ensure a correspondingly enhanced student experience; this has ensured that we develop our curricula and research programs in directions consistent with the most interesting developments in creation and study of contemporary arts, and to be able to provide the sort of student mentoring and support that is a trait of our undergraduate and graduate programs.

For this report, the seven areas and graduate programs have developed reports on their progress in fostering three of five goals enshrined in our Educational Goals:

- **Critical and historical mindedness:** a critical and historical understanding of the place of art in the world; the ability to apply historical knowledge and multiple critical perspectives to their own artistic and scholarly disciplines and practices.
- **Openness to experimentation and surprise:** a receptiveness to encountering and learning things that cannot be anticipated; an openness to embracing unexpected

opportunities to gain knowledge, to gather experience, and to expand their artistic and scholarly range.

- **Artistic and intellectual independence:** an ability to work on one's own, to define artistic and scholarly projects, and to carry them out independently; disciplined reading, writing, research, and technical skills useful for the independent, creative, and collaborative tasks required in varied artistic and professional settings.

1. All **Art, Performance and Cinema Studies** professors have amplified the **critical, historical and geopolitical contexts** of the artworks and films students encounter in their classes. Interdisciplinary knowledge is central to the first-year courses we teach, particularly CA186, Art and the Moving Image, and CA118, History of Modern Art, which are designed to be accessible and meaningful to makers and scholars in all SCA's undergraduate programs. At the second-year level, CA 217, Introduction to Performance Studies, contextualizes the history of aesthetic performance through the dual lens of theatre studies and performance art. In this course students additionally learn about performance theory as derived from anthropology, speech act theory, gender studies, and literary criticism.

The instructors are encouraging **experimentation and surprise** through the introduction of many new kinds of minor and major assignments in studies lectures and seminars. In CA217, for instance, students are asked to perform some aspect of the syllabus to bring alive the weekly topics in an embodied way. Another course which has been thoroughly revised to further to our educational goals is CA 319W, Critical Writing in the Arts, which is a popular school-wide writing course. APCS instructors now expect students to take a multi-modal approach to their critical reflections on different artworks and art practices, asking them to produce podcasts and video essays alongside written reviews and essays.

Intellectual independence is encouraged in all classes, especially in the final assignments, which often derive from the notes and journals they are asked to keep based on the course readings, screenings, discussions, and short assignments. It is the students' job to craft a final project proposal from one or more of these resources, and to see it through from conception to final execution.

2. The **Dance area** has been in transition with two recent retirements, one new hire (and one in process), and a restructuring of our dance curriculum. These changes have brought a new set of faculty, including a continuing faculty member whose artistic practise spans Asia and North America, along with several local artists with diverse contemporary approaches to movement research, and new electronic sound artists who are playing for our movement and training series.

One of the most exciting changes we have made in relation to the SCA learning objective that focuses on **artistic and intellectual independence** is a redesign of our improvisation and composition courses, culminating in a fourth-year senior project. We have developed a one-year course that starts with creative individual research in the fall and culminates in a performance of senior students' original work in the spring term. This shift coordinates our creative series of courses in studio and lecture formats, focusing the curriculum on student-led research and performance.

Connected to this change is our **history and aesthetic** courses aligning with the research of our Limited Term and Sessional Faculty, who collaborate on topics of gesture and site specific and embodied trajectories within a diverse range of histories and context. Over the past four years, the area's critical and historical offerings to students at the upper level was also enhanced by a course on Performing Black Identities Across Diasporic Spaces.

Throughout the pandemic, the dance area continued to offer classes online and in hybrid formats that sustained high enrolments. We also took advantage of Zoom culture by hosting talks with international dance artists, including Canadian choreographer Crystal Pite, as part of our SCA Speaker Series, and American dance artist Bill T. Jones through the SCA Equity Committee. Further guest teachers offered classes in Jamaican dance forms, hip hop, salsa, flamenco, and many others through partnerships and faculty grant support.

Lastly, we continue to find ways to have a greater commitment to **experimentation** through exchanges across disciplines in many of our courses. For example, our third-year composition students are doing joint projects with composers and lighting designers this fall through an alignment of class times between the disciplines. These changes deepen our commitment to encouraging students to take risks and be open to the possibilities that result.

3. The **Film area** continues to align its programmatic goals with the undergraduate goals of the SCA. First, by supporting our students in developing multiple and diverse **critical perspectives**, we encourage the creation of work that moves beyond "story" to explore, interrogate and reimagine the narrative possibilities of cinema. Second, we continue to encourage **openness to experimentation and surprise** through a combination of group and individual exercises and projects that center process and often lead to unexpected results. Across our pedagogy, we further support **openness to experimentation** by screening a very diverse range of films in every year of our program. Third, we continue to nurture **artistic and intellectual independence** by supporting upper-division students' work towards a final directed thesis film in their fourth year. As a reflection of our program's rigor, our students go on to screen their films and win awards in festivals around the world. This year, SCA 4th year film student Santi Henderson won the Grand Prix at the *Festival du Nouveau Cinéma* in Montreal, competing against 38 films from film schools across Canada to garner the top prize. We are extremely proud of this accomplishment and look forward to continuing to support our students towards success.

4. A core course in the **Music/Sound area**, formerly titled "Music Since 1900," provided what was considered a necessary **historical perspective** of contemporary art music by focusing on the European and North American art-music tradition. We recognised that such a limited viewpoint no longer served a constructive purpose, and the course was entirely redone with the intention of becoming more inclusive of all contemporary music, including both popular culture and cultures beyond this limited scope, with the notion of decolonising the curriculum firmly in mind. The course, now titled "Contexts in Creative Music and Sound Practice", introduces our students to a diversity of approaches; furthermore, this course continues to draw many non-SCA students, serving as a recruitment vehicle.

Additionally, our core technical training course, "Music Fundamentals," has been similarly transformed. Initially focused on giving students a fundamental grasp of Western classical music theory, we recognized that such focused training was too prescriptive and exclusive. Our new year-long course, "Sound Fundamentals" explores techniques, concepts, and frameworks from a wide breadth of musical traditions **across different cultures and historical periods**, with a focus on imparting a plurality of ways of thinking about sound, as opposed to elevating one perspective above all others.

A common objective in the redesign of our labs and studio classes was to create courses that embrace possibilities (methodological, aesthetic, etc.) beyond what we can predict. By putting ourselves in a **position of discovery**, students are less likely to be distracted or limited by trying to fit their work into what they believe are our expectations and are rather driven by a personal sense of purpose and curiosity. In this approach, a cycle of sharing and discovery can be set in motion in which our role is to support students as they develop their own new (and renewable) creative strategies.

Finally, we reorganised our curriculum to allow for greater **artistic independence**. By no longer focusing on a single format – e.g., the hired professional ensemble - and instead allowing for a greater diversity of compositional approaches, we have witnessed an increasingly wide variety of work produced by our students in every semester's Music and Sound Festival. The former seminar class that brought all composition students together to write for a designated acoustic ensemble has transitioned into seminar discussions with invited guests, themselves bringing a diversity of orientations, methods, and interests stemming from a broad array of backgrounds and lived experiences. By presenting to the students such a range of contemporary artistic production, we encourage our students to explore their own **artistic and intellectual independence** freely. This has further been reinforced by teaching our skills-based courses in "labs", which no longer require major creative projects as a final output; instead, the labs remain centres for skills-based instruction and focused experimentation, while small group tutorials within the Creative Sound Studio are the loci for exploring the personalised creative toolboxes students are formulating.

5. The **Theatre Performance area** has taken significant strides since 2020 to overhaul, update, and advance its pedagogical mission and curricular offerings. This is in large part due to the arrival of four new assistant professors in performance. In collaboration with our UCC, the Office of University Curriculum and Institutional Liaison, and the SCA at large, we are anticipating a full-scale, formal modification of our program by the academic year 2023-24. Key aspects of this sustained overhaul since 2020, as related to the SCA's Educational Goals, include: a move away from 'actor-training' towards original student-led performance creation within our studios and a stronger emphasis on performance based creative research across all our courses. Highlights of our advancement include the introduction of experimental, contemporary, and interdisciplinary devising exercises across our core studios that embrace a heuristic model of performance making (i.e., we discover performance by making it). While specific to each instructor and course, these exercises generally demand that students develop new and experimental techniques of performance response to course subjects that range from material culture, art history, philosophy, socio-political issues, and beyond. Through these progressive systems of creative response, and guided by our core

instructors, students develop techniques for **original creative research, composition, and critique** informed by current practices and ideas from the broad field of contemporary performance. Our Context courses have been updated to cover not only Theatre History but engage in creative research informed by multi-modal methodologies and epistemologies inherent to the interdisciplinary field of Performance Studies. Re-imagined as hybrid studio-seminars, **students in our Context courses now engage various histories and theories of performance through a combination of critical-creative reading, writing, and performance making.** In collaboration with Julia Lane (SLC Writing Services Coordinator) and Sarah Turner (CEE Educational Consultant), we've mapped out strategies to strengthen literacy within our student body through progressive (years 1-4) pedagogic objectives that cover various forms of writing (i.e. creative writing for live performance; critical writing for artistic reflection; professional writing based on industry standards). In 2021, we successfully piloted a two-semester fourth year BFA Capstone Project within the area, which asks students to first determine a 'burning question' central to them as young artists, then develop a unique, performance based method of inquiry on those issues by reviewing and integrating past studio and context courses. In the following semester, they mount their Capstone Projects for live audiences and are tasked to produce them following professional protocols (e.g. developing technical riders, rehearsal plans and reports, budgets, design plans, etc). Ultimately, these Capstone Projects intend to provide students with the necessary experience to enter the field as emerging artists post graduation and to professionalize by way of their unique voices and practices. Across all these advancements towards our Educational Goals, **our aim has been to support and produce young artists by giving them ample opportunities to lead their own creative projects, to develop the necessary critical tools to analyze performance across broad fields of knowledge, and to challenge us to adapt our own teaching in response to their lived experiences and discoveries.**

6. The **Production and Design area** has been steadily reorganizing our curriculum, with the influx of three new faculty. With the aim of incorporating greater **critical and historical mindedness** into our pedagogy we have focused on the inclusion of historical and contemporary sources, analysis, and theory in our upper year classes. In addition, students are required to apply these perspectives in active studio critique and discussion. Our curriculum has historically encouraged **openness to experimentation and surprise** through ample hands-on experience making work in collaborative interdisciplinary environments. The articulation of this receptiveness as a strength at the school level has helped us frame these opportunities to our students as a community and professional value. We teach students to recognize and respond flexibly to a range of production environments, responding to the unexpected with empathy and a sense of play. Over the past three years we have focused most intensively on nurturing **artistic and intellectual independence** in our students. We have done this by re-orienting two of our senior classes to concentrate on creative agency, artistic research, and developing disciplinary communication tools. These classes allow students to take a performance from concept to realization, driven by their individual artistic interests, and supported by peer communities.

7. The **Visual Art area** frames creative practice as critical research and teaches students to situate their work within art historical and theoretical contexts. They further this knowledge through the required electives in Art, Performance and Cinema Studies. Students achieve **critical mindedness** through our continuous application of a questioning-feedback method

in critique and class discussion, gaining information from cultural theory and teasing out knowledge of form and materiality from hands-on practice. Across our studio classes, but also particularly in our seminars CA 366 and CA 367 (held in parallel with our 3rd year studio courses), assigned readings and presentations on the issues of contemporary art emphasize the critical frameworks that inform theoretical, historical, and methodological aspects of contemporary art discourse. Students are also encouraged to take theoretical courses from a range of SCA offerings. Aspects of **historical mindedness** are present in our evolving syllabi, which are meant to adapt to the rapid changes in the contemporary art milieu, understand the historical conditions which form the ground for contemporary focus on decolonization, and question gender and identity formation and climate change from the perspective of contemporary art works. **Historical mindedness** is encouraged in students through their required Art History classes, but also through the continuing assignment to research and present on artists of the past and present.

Artistic and intellectual independence is encouraged throughout all the core courses within the major, in which we consistently ask students to identify their questions, and to discover their own creative methods for exploring these questions. Studying in a cohort for four years, students become increasingly articulate at giving feedback in group critiques and concerning their individual projects; they observe and take pride in not only their own development but the development of their cohort. The cohort resonates as a support system after formal study; our students have banded together to form many independent projects post-graduation, from magazines to exhibitions. The quality of our fourth- and third-year exhibition opportunities are notable for modeling future professional settings. Through the Audain Visual Art Residency, the third-year cohort creates and exhibits in the Audain Gallery work that responds to the research initiated through working with a visiting international or national artist. To further their research, students coordinate the programming that accompanies the exhibition. The capstone project for our students is the fourth-year exhibition, which also takes place in the Audain Gallery and includes feedback sessions with the Audain's professional curatorial team. Our skills classes are responding to students' increased desire for hands-on knowledge and recently included a fiber arts course for the first time.

The visual art core courses are not based on disciplinary training but are project-based classes where **openness to experimentation and surprise** is encouraged throughout the course. This open experimental approach is utterly central to our first two visual art courses (CA 160 and CA 161). These courses are based on projects which continuously morph and evolve. An attitude of non-preciousness is encouraged and the drive to represent is questioned through continuously evolving a single project far beyond the expectations of the student artist. Surprising themselves by committing to (for instance) negative space and building form from an abstract structure, all the while attuning their cognitive and material skills to generate questions of form (relations of wholes and parts for instance) is a portal into the inquisitiveness required for artistic research. Other lower-level undergraduate courses (CA 260, 261) further shape students' abilities to confidently pursue their intuitive curiosity and supplement it with material and theoretical research in response to project prompts that can be resolved using a range of media of their own choosing. In upper-level classes (CA 360, 361, 460, 461) students learn to generate their own projects, moving from materials to concepts and looping back to question their own assumptions and to re-work.

Discussions of work in progress with professors and other students, as well as research presentations, foster critical questions about what is truly relevant to the arts of our time. Our open plan studio environment is treated as a living laboratory. This laboratory environment is supported by mixer events such as our “All Studio Crits,” where first/second/third/fourth year students show work and discuss together in a self-directed casual atmosphere.

8. In our **MA program**, students achieve **critical and historical mindedness** primarily through their core course requirements, in which they are encouraged to analyze their individual objects of study within the history of interdisciplinary critical approaches to art. We have recently added a new course, CA 828: New Approaches to Sound and the Arts, to round out this educational goal. Students also achieve mastery of cross-disciplinary critical methods in the arts through TA and RA opportunities outside of their areas of expertise. Evidence of success in achieving this goal can be found in the MA Symposium which concludes the program, at which students publicly present and defend the results of their research. That we have equipped our MA students with an advanced understanding of the place of art in the world can also be seen in the number of students who have gone on to specialized PhD programs (in art education, theatre studies, and art history, to name just a few).

An **openness to experimentation and surprise** is again built into the fabric of our MA program through the fostering of interdisciplinary critical perspectives across our course requirements. Additionally, the extended essay requirement, which sees the students revising one of their course papers for publication in CA 829, and then presenting it publicly at the MA Symposium, builds in students a receptiveness to new ideas and unexpected research outcomes. Our students showed abundant ingenuity on this front during the pandemic, when library and other institutional closures required them to become especially creative in the pursuit of their scholarly research.

The MA program encourages **intellectual independence** in a number of explicit ways: 1) through CA 822, the MA Colloquium course, in which students take charge of planning and organizing the public Symposium that concludes their program; 2) through the editing of the *Comparative Media Arts* journal, an online open-access, peer-reviewed journal now in its seventh year, and which has recently established a transition program in managing editors that sees MA students mentoring each other in the knowledge and practice of scholarly editing; and 3) through our MA Practicum (CA 827) and MA Internship (CA 830) classes, in which students pursue independent research and work opportunities related to their studies with arts organizations in the city.

9. In our **MFA program**, students achieve **critical mindedness** through the two interdisciplinary theory seminars (CA 811 and CA 812) that accompany their studio courses, and in which they develop the theoretical, conceptual, and historical perspectives that will serve as the foundations for their graduating projects. MFA students also frequently take additional seminar classes, either as part of our MA and PhD offerings, or through graduate classes in other SFU units. Visiting artist talks and workshops round out their critical learning, and during the pandemic we placed a special emphasis on streamed lectures with major artists as a way to supplement MFA students’ learning. That our MFA program

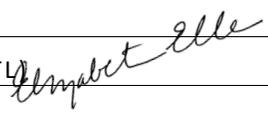
successfully equips students with critical mindedness can be seen in the number of graduates who have since applied to our new PhD program, or to others like it (including at Oxford).

An **openness to experimentation and surprise** is built into the fabric of the MFA program via its collaborative and cohort-based design. In their very first studio course, students collaborate with peers from other artistic disciplines on a series of projects; the outcomes are per force unanticipated, but the opportunities to enrich their artistic knowledge, experience, and skills are equally robust. These opportunities continue throughout the program, with students collaborating on each other's projects, TAing or RAing for faculty mentors in areas outside of their immediate artistic expertise and participating in artist residencies and internships that come up during their programs. How well our MFA program encourages such opportunities can be seen in how quickly and successfully students pivoted during the pandemic, with graduating performance projects designed for live audiences suddenly moving online, and with visual art exhibitions being planned, executed, and installed while adhering to public social distancing guidelines.

Though our MFA program encourages interdisciplinary collaboration, we also emphasize **artistic and intellectual independence**, most explicitly through the MFA Graduating Project (CA 898), which requires students to conceptualize, execute, publicly present, and defend a significant work of art. With students working remotely during the pandemic, this independence was brought out in vivid ways; isolation from peers and mentors was not an impediment to students' success and forced them to take ownership of all aspects of their work. Our MFA students also hone their ability to work as an independent collective through the conceptualization and realization of their first-year Spring Show. We have reconceived when and how this occurs, and the most recent iteration was incredibly successful, a testament to students' "ability to participate in the various aspects of the planning and staging" of a public art exhibition.



MEMORANDUM

ATTENTION:	Elsbeth Pratt, Director, School for the Contemporary Arts
FROM:	Elizabeth Elle, Vice-Provost, Learning & Teaching (for SCUTL) 
RE:	SCA Mid-cycle Educational Goals Assessment
DATE:	March 20, 2023

The Senate Committee for University Teaching and Learning has recently been charged with providing feedback to units in their mid-cycle assessment of Educational Goals (EGs). As part of your External Review Action Plan, we note that you have been working to streamline your curriculum, which we applaud. We recognize the need for curricular reform with your changing faculty complement prior to further work on assessing educational goals, and the important work you’ve done (including through the pandemic) to ensure your graduands leave with essential skills to further their careers.

Your review of how you are fostering three of your five EGs is demonstrates the pedagogical commitment of your faculty, as well as your ongoing work to improve your courses. We suggest, however, that experimenting with ways to assess your student’s skills and their learning would provide insight into your programs that is currently lacking. That is, focussing more on the students’ experiences and outcomes, rather than on the “inputs” of your excellent work in updating your courses. You have a great opportunity to document the impact of the changes you are making; the EG process is meant to help you document and celebrate your program.

We encourage you to consider leveraging your capstone courses as a way to understand student achievement. In addition to using some aspect of how your faculty assess students in their capstones, you might consider including student self-reflection as an assessment. It can be a powerful way to understand the strengths of your program, and ways it could improve. You might consider piloting this approach in one of your seven areas to see how well it translates to your students and your program.

Please visit SFU’s dedicated [educational goals website](#) to help you with next steps, and should you wish some support with defining your goals, moving towards assessment, or other aspects of this work such as an exit survey of your graduands, we encourage you to reach out to LEAP, the [Learning Experiences Assessment and Planning](#) group in the AVP-LT portfolio (email them at: leap@sfu.ca). There are staff on the team with expertise in EG assessment and survey analysis, and they are here to help you.