



Media, Information and Technoculture Media and the Public Interest Final Assessment Report

Faculty / Affiliated University College	Faculty of Information and Media Studies
Degrees Offered	BA in MIT, Major, Honors Specialization BA in MPI, Major, Honors Specialization
Modules Reviewed	Media, Information & Technoculture Media in the Public Interest
External Consultants	Rebecca Sullivan, Professor, Women's Studies Program, University of Calgary Judith Nicholson, Associate Professor, Department of Communication Studies, Wilfrid Laurier University
Internal Reviewers	Joan Finegan, Associate Dean, Faculty of Social Science
Date of Site Visit	27 March 2017
Evaluation	Good Quality with report in two years
Approval Dates	SUPR-U: June 7, 2017 SCAPA: September 13, 2017 Senate: September 22, 2017

Executive Summary

The reviewers met with all the constituencies involved in MIT and MPI programs including the Vice-Provost of Academic Programs and the Vice-Provost Academic Planning, Policy & Faculty, two western librarians, faculty members (both full-time and limited duties), office staff, staff in technological services, TAs and undergraduates. The day was well organized and a wealth of information about the program was shared.

The MIT program focuses on political economy and cultural studies while the MPI looks at media through a social justice lens. Through these programs, students develop digital competencies and the ability to analyze media critically. The programs are writing intensive; MIT 1025F was particularly helpful in developing these writing skills. The MIT program offers an internship option where students can apply their education in the real-world, while the MPI program offers a senior level practicum. One very exciting course offered was a field trip to El Salvador. The MPI program, in particular, excelled at offering experiential learning opportunities.

The reviewers were impressed with the number of alumni who had gone on to successful careers in media and noted that MIT had an excellent reputation. The reviewers hoped that the University would commit to ensuring resources are available to develop courses where theory and production courses interact meaningfully.

The reviewers compared MIT and MPI programs to communication programs in Ontario. They argued that these other programs were less writing intensive and had a stronger emphasis on methods. The reviewers questioned whether the emphasis on writing was too great and whether instead there should be more group work and oral communication. In fact, many of the MIT and MPA courses do involve group work and oral communication. While these comparisons to Carleton and McMaster were helpful, it should be noted that the programs offered in FIMS are not intended to be communication programs.

The reviewers noted that students in the honours stream take a methods course in third year and they felt that this was too late in the program. They encouraged the faculty to consider implementing a second-year methods course for all students. This methods course should emphasize library resources and teach students how to look at data critically including data from polls and surveys. More generally such a course should help students understand the social implications of big data.

They recommended that Faculty take a closer look at their learning outcomes. Is it possible to integrate research into their degree outcomes? Can learning outcomes be developed by program as well as by year? The faculty is currently engaging in this curriculum review. Changes to the first two years of the program have been implemented, and they are currently looking ahead to the third year. Indeed as part of this process, the faculty in FIMS will consider whether it is possible to open fourth-year level courses to students in the Major and not just for those in the honours specialization. They are also considering streamlining course offerings

While the program can continue without faculty renewal, the reviewers were concerned that there were no pre-tenured faculty members and that the faculty complement had shrunk by 25% in the last decade. They argued that full time tenure-track faculty renewal is critical to any program's health.

Significant Strengths of the Program

1. Excellent library resources with access to core databases and journals relevant to the discipline
2. An exceptional academic advising support team
3. 86% of all required courses in MIT and MPA are taught by full-time professors.
4. An engaged undergraduate student population. Their "Open Wide" publication is particularly well done.
5. High calibre alumni
6. State of the Art facilities
7. Experiential learning opportunities in the MPA program

Suggestions for Improvement & Enhancement

1. Continue with curriculum renewal including adding more undergraduate research opportunities for students, developing a second-year methods course and ensuring that fourth-year courses are part of the Major Modules.
2. Develop learning outcomes for different programs and different years
3. Prevent upper-year MIT and MPI students from taking the first-year service course, a suggestion the Faculty is implementing. (In addition, the reviewers raised the question as to whether or not first-year FIMS students should take the first-year service course.)
4. Encourage pedagogical innovation. Towards this end, the faculty will begin a lunch-time series of workshops focusing on pedagogy. Similarly to ensure TAs are utilized efficiently, TA training sessions will now include faculty instructors and support staff. In this way there should be better communication between TAs and faculty and consequently better program delivery.

Recommendations Required for Program Sustainability

Recommendation	Responsibility		
Review and refine learning outcomes	Faculty		