

# Two-Year Progress Report

## Global Business and Digital Arts (BGBDA) and Digital Experience Innovation (MDEI)

### February 2023

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#### Background

The first cyclical review for Global Business and Digital Arts (BGBDA) and Digital Experience Innovation (MDEI) was concluded in October 2020. In accordance with the University of Waterloo's Institutional Quality Assurance Process, a Final Assessment Report, which provides a synthesis of the external evaluation and the internal response of the programs (BGBDA, MDEI) delivered by the Stratford School of Interaction Design & Business (Stratford School), was approved by Senate Graduate and Research Council in January 2021. Prior to this, the Stratford School conducted a self-assessment and the Quality Assurance Office invited two external reviewers, Dr. James Nadler, Professor and Chair, School of Creative Industries, Ryerson University, and Dr. Stanley Ruecker, Professor, Department of Art and Design, University of Illinois, to assess the academic programs through an arms-length review process that resulted in 16 recommendations. The progress of the program in implementing these recommendations is provided below.

#### Enrollment over the past two years

	Honours	Grad
2021-2022 (CURRENT YR)	180	42
2020-2021 (LAST YR)	183	54

#### Progress on Implementation Plan

#### Recommendations

1. Transportation for students needs to be improved from Waterloo. Since the cancellation of the Greyhound line there is no public transportation service between Kitchener-Waterloo and Stratford. The proposed addition of a GO-Bus service would make a significant difference.

#### Status: **in progress**

Details: In 2021, the Government of Ontario provided funding to Perth County to launch a pilot program for regional transit ('PC Express'), which runs from Stratford to Kitchener/Waterloo several times a day. The closest stop to the UW campus is Conestoga Mall in Waterloo, however, the UW campus is not yet served directly. While some students took advantage of this initiative in 2022-23, the scale (one 45-seat bus), cost (\$10/trip), frequency (once per hour, six times per day) the fact that the funding for this program is scheduled to run out in December 2023 meant that we needed to fund alternative transportation. In August 2023, the Stratford School partnered with

the Faculty of Arts and WUSA to run a pilot program, where students can take a campus shuttle to Stratford in the morning and back in the afternoon. The cost per term is \$175, which works out to \$2.75 per trip. The pilot was designed following a school-wide transit survey, and 100% of tickets were sold by the third day of the fall semester. The School and WUSA will continue to monitor the success of the program via surveys completed twice per semester. The pilot will conclude in April 2024.

2. As many students will continue to commute from Waterloo, avoid wherever possible the scheduling of evening classes especially in winter term. This is a safety issue as the backroads are treacherous in the snowbelt. Faculty members report that their cars often left the road for the ditch in the winter. Currently, only one faculty member lives in Stratford and the others split their time between the Stratford campus and the departments at Waterloo where they are cross appointed.

Status: **in progress**

Details: We are addressing this issue in several ways:

- We have launched a pilot program to provide affordable student transportation to the Stratford School.
- We have shifted to a commuter-friendly schedule so that students can reduce the number of days spent on campus. A drawback to this model is that our space is under-utilized in the evenings, and students spend less time in the community.
- We are supporting the City of Stratford in their bid to provide GO Bus service to the region. Specifically, we have requested that Metrolinx consider extending the Route 25 bus that serves Guelph, Laurier, and Waterloo to include the Stratford School.
- We are actively working with the Dean of Arts and the Provost's office to build University owned and run student accommodation in Stratford.

All four solutions will mitigate the risks that come with commuting to/from the Stratford School. As we appoint more faculty members to the Stratford School, the number of Stratford School employees residing in Stratford is slowly growing (currently 3 faculty members and about 50% of staff).

3. Improve the administrative connection with the Waterloo main campus. Students and faculty seem to have a sense of isolation. In other words, recognize and fully accommodate the satellite nature of the school.

Status: **completed**

Details: The Stratford School became an administrative and academic unit in July 2018 and is now integrated into the Faculty of Arts on par with the other Schools and Departments of the Faculty. This means that we have representation on all major committees in the Faculty of Arts and a voice at the table in the same way that all Arts units do.

Faculty are encouraged to network and build research collaborations with faculty from other units. Six of our faculty are affiliated with the Games Institute, and several hold cross appointments to Systems Design Engineering, Computer Science and Mechanical Engineering to supervise graduate students. We have converted four under-utilized seminar rooms into shared lab spaces and have allocated a large office space to graduate students and postdocs. We actively support a strong internal culture and collaboration between faculty and staff in our day-to-day operations.

4. Establish a Program Advisory Board drawn from industry and government of experts who could serve as program advisors, employers, and potential donors. This will help the programs avoid falling behind industry trends.

Status: **completed**

Details: The Advisory Board has been established and the first meeting was held on May 5, 2022. The Advisory Board consists of 10 members from academia, industry, and the City of Stratford. The Advisory Board will meet twice a year, once in the spring and once in the fall. Current members are:

First Name	Last Name	Salutation	Title	Organization Name
Jessica	Thompson	Prof.	Director and Associate Professor, Board Chair	University of Waterloo, Stratford School
Sheila	Ager	Dr.	Dean of Arts	University of Waterloo
Dan	Mathieson	Mr.	Mayor	City of Stratford
Markus	Grupp	Mr.	Senior Director	Kira Systems
Jorge	Fernandes	Mr.	CTO	Rogers
Danny	Ho	Mr.	Director	LCBO
Brad	Clarence	Mr.	Senior Interaction Designer	Google Nest
Ellyn	Winters-Robynson	Ms.	President and CMO	Ignition
Deepika	Malik	Ms.	Transformational Design Leader	Sunlife
Alex	Chepovetsky	Mr.	President	Havas
Richmond	Sedcole	Mr.	in transition	in transition
Leah	Zhang-Kennedy	Dr.	Assistant Professor	Stratford School

5. Develop program outcomes that are explicitly keyed to individual course learning outcomes and deliverables: a course mapping exercise. The Center for Teaching Excellence can help to organize

this. Tie this back to the messaging of the program. We suggest that the School consider specific program outcomes for MDEI and how they differ from the undergraduate program.

Status: **completed**

Details: Course learning outcomes and deliverables for GBDA as well as program outcomes for Masters of Digital Experience Innovation (MDEI) have been completed and were attached as appendices to the Final Assessment Report.

6. We appreciate that the School conducted a major curricular review two years ago. Allow the current curricular changes of two years ago to play out and be analyzed for a year or two before tackling any further major changes.

Status: **in progress**

Details: As of fall 2021, the former GBDA curriculum has been phased out, and we continue to monitor the success of the new GBDA curriculum. We will conduct the next internal review to evaluate the changes made in 2022-23.

We are starting to see some of the impacts of our decisions. In fall 2022, we admitted a record number of students (220) to form our first 'co-op cohort'. While UX remains one of the core areas of our curriculum, we have expanded our offerings to take advantage of the considerable expertise of our faculty, and to ensure that our program continues to provide hands on, practical training in emerging technologies, such as virtual reality.

After an internal review of our business offerings in fall 2023, we have decided to propose a revision to our program to increase the number of required courses from five to eight (the equivalent of a minor). These revisions will provide students with more substantial training in business practices, which in turn will open a wider variety of co-op options and better and better prepare students to enter the workforce.

7. We suggest that the School strongly consider, if at all possible, extending the summer internship into a full co-op option.

Status: **completed**

Details: Intake of the first GBDA cohort into co-op, which is now mandatory for the program, began in fall 2022.

8. Continue to expand the business side of the curriculum, especially dealing with finance.

Status: **completed**

Details: An introductory course in business financials (GBDA 311) was added to the BGBDA curriculum and was offered for the first time in the 2020-2021 academic year.

9. Explore opening up more electives to allow students to specialize more than is currently possible in a highly prescribed undergraduate program. We would suggest allowing undergraduates in third year be allowed to take two or three electives within BGBDA. This would allow those interested students to explore business or design in more depth.

Status: **completed**

Details: We currently offer 2-3 electives on-site for our students at the Stratford School. With the increased number of online offerings, students have a broader choice for electives either on or off-campus.

10. In new tenure track hires, try to recruit faculty with formal training in Design.

Status: **in progress**

Details: Since 2020, we have added three tenure-track Assistant Professors in User-Experience Design (Dr. Leah Zhang-Kennedy 2020), (Drs. Ville Makela, Cayley MacArthur, 2021), and Design and Technology (Drs. Lauren Kilgour, 2022, Karen Cochrane, 2023). We plan to hire two more Design and Technology faculty in 2024.

11. Do an inventory on what services would be important for Stratford campus and do those right. For example, does Stratford need some kind of food bank for its students?

Status: **completed**

Details: We have completed an initial analysis of services and continue to monitor what services are needed as the campus grows. Currently, we offer:

- Food bank.
- On-site and off-site counselling (through the Counselling office on main campus).
- Accessibility Services (through main campus, referrals available through Student Services).
- Student Success Office (through main campus, referrals available through Student Services)
- Safe-ride program for students residing in Stratford.
- Medical Services (through the Stratford Hospital Medical Services and the University's Health Services)

In fall 2023, we were able to add a series of Stratford-specific questions to the Student Experience Survey:

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
I have access to transportation to and from the Stratford campus (1)	•	•	•	•	•

I find it easy to commute to and from the Stratford campus (2)

• • • • •

I feel welcome in the city of Stratford (3)

• • • • •

I have access to enough on-campus services at the Stratford campus (i.e., on campus counselling, housing support, athletics, food services) (4)

• • • • •

- Find some way to provide an introduction of the students to the library. Reinstate library services as part of the orientation program for both undergraduates and masters students. Increase classroom invitations to librarians; explore some librarian office hours on site.

Status: **completed**

Details: The Stratford School will continue to work with the Dana Porter Library to provide learning opportunities and research supports for our students. Each year, a faculty member is appointed as Library Representative, who liaises with the library on these supports and communicates information to our faculty and staff. Students and faculty can order delivery of research materials directly to the Stratford School through Interlibrary Loans. Because the use of Library Resources only occurs with a small portion of our curriculum, there are no plans to have an onsite librarian at the Stratford School. Library visits and tours are integrated into the Faculty of Arts Orientation for incoming students.

- Increase on-site hours for student counselors.

Status: **completed**

Details: At the time of the cyclical review, the counsellor onsite on a bi-weekly basis. In 2022, we arranged to have a dedicated counsellor onsite every Thursday from 8:30 am - 4:30 pm, with additional appointments available on Main Campus. In 2023, we changed counsellors to better reflect and support the demographics of our student body. We have connections with mental health response units in the City of Stratford and our Advising team has direct lines to Counselling Services and the Accessibility Office.

- We encourage the School to arrange new spaces for classes, accommodation, and student life. For example, we suggest that the University could support the creation of local student clubs and provide them with space. Provide or support student events that might also attract other students from main campus. We recognize and appreciate that the School and University are already planning to rent more space in Stratford for these purposes and working with a private developer to build apartment spaces appropriate for the students and that can compete with quality of rental accommodation available in Waterloo.

Status: **in progress**

Details: In March 2023, the University of Waterloo tendered an RFP for the design of a new campus residence building in Stratford. The project was awarded to Teeple Architects. The pre-design process

was completed from July – September 2023 in consultation with the Director, the Administrative Manager, Campus Housing, Plant Operations, and the City of Stratford. The Pre-Design Report and Cost Estimate was completed in December 2023. The building features five floors of accommodation space (86%), with instructional space on the main floor (14%).

As per the RFP, the design features semi-private rooms, micro-studios, and apartment style suites. Each floor has dedicated kitchen, study and recreation space, and additional study and lounge spaces are located on the first floor. The proposed residence will house 303 students and provide integrated classroom and lab space for students and faculty working in Extended Reality (Virtual and Augmented Reality) and three-dimensional design (interactive objects, wearable interfaces). The classrooms are designed to support learning activities that are not possible in our existing building. The Stratford School Director will be producing a Business Case for review by the Dean’s Office and Senior Leadership in early 2024.

15. For the MDEI candidates, we suggest establishing some course work and formal networking opportunities in Toronto.

Status: **Complete**

Details: The MDEI program transitioned to a fully online program in 2020. Students complete coursework asynchronously, and the program begins and ends with two Program Intensives designed to instruct students in working in remote teams (Intensive 1, late August) and design business solutions to address industry challenges (Intensive 2, early April). While scheduled networking opportunities in specific locations are not feasible because students work in many different geographic locations, the intensives are designed to build productive collegial working relationships within each cohort and to provide networking and mentorship opportunities through our partners.

16. Consider development of a research masters and PhD to enrich the curriculum and extend the reach of the program.

Status: **in progress**

Details: We have developed a new Master’s and PhD program in User Experience Research and Design (UXRD) to be launched in fall 2025. Proposals were provided to the Dean of Arts’ Office in September 2023. If approved by the Provost, the programs will be submitted to the Graduate Affairs Group (GAG) in Winter 2024.

## Updated Implementation Plan

	<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Proposed Actions</b>	<b>Responsibility for Leading and Resourcing (if applicable) the Actions</b>	<b>Timeline for addressing Recommendations</b>
1.	Transportation for students needs to be improved from Waterloo. Since the cancellation of the Greyhound line there is no public transportation service between Kitchener-Waterloo and Stratford. The proposed addition of a Go-Bus service would make a significant difference.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New bus route added.</li> <li>• Launch Inter-Campus Shuttle</li> </ul>	Director, Stratford School Dean of Arts City of Stratford	Complete – Pilot Transit program launched August 2023
2.	As many students will continue to commute from Waterloo, avoid wherever possible the scheduling of evening classes especially in winter term. This is a safety issue as the backroads are treacherous in the snowbelt. Faculty members report that their cars often left the road for the ditch in the winter. Currently, only one faculty member lives in Stratford and the others split their time between the Stratford campus and the departments at Waterloo where they are cross appointed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer certain courses online or in hybrid format.</li> <li>• Add University run and operated student accommodation.</li> </ul>	Director, Stratford School	In progress – Timeline TBD
3.	Improve the administrative connection with the Waterloo main campus. Students and faculty seem to have a sense of isolation. In other words, recognize and fully accommodate the satellite nature of the school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish stronger administrative connection with main campus.</li> </ul>	Dean of Arts Director, Stratford School	Complete – effective July 1, 2018, the Stratford School of Interaction Design & Business obtained official status as a School.
4.	Establish a Program Advisory Board drawn from industry and government of experts who could	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a Program Advisory Board</li> </ul>	Director, Stratford School	Complete – Fall 2022
5.	Develop program outcomes that are explicitly keyed to individual course learning outcomes and deliverables: a course mapping exercise. The Center for Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Articulate program outcomes and learning goals.</li> </ul>	Director, Stratford School Centre for Teaching Excellence Curriculum committee	Complete – GBDA Learning Outcomes



	Excellence can help to organize this. Tie this back to the messaging of the program. We suggest that the School consider specific program outcomes for MDEI and how they differ from the undergraduate program.			Complete – MDEI Learning Outcomes
6.	We appreciate that the School conducted a major curricular review two years ago. Allow the current curricular changes of two years ago to play out and be analyzed for a year or two before tackling any further major changes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct review of impact of curriculum changes</li> </ul>	Director, Stratford School Curriculum committee	In progress; 2022-2023
7.	We suggest that the School strongly consider, if at all possible, extending the summer internship into a full co-op option	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce full co-op option for BGBDA.</li> </ul>	Director, Stratford School CEE	Complete - 2022
8.	Continue to expand the business side of the curriculum, especially dealing with finance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offer introductory course in business financials (GBDA 311)</li> </ul>	Director, Stratford School	Complete - 2020-2021
9.	Explore opening up more electives to allow students to specialize more than is currently possible in a highly prescribed undergraduate program. We would suggest allowing undergraduates in third year be allowed to take two or three electives within BGBDA. This would allow those interested students to explore business or design in more depth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will offer one elective in 2019-20, steadily increasing the number to 3-5 electives per term.</li> </ul>	Director, Stratford School Curriculum committee	Complete - 2021-2022
10.	In new tenure track hires, try to recruit faculty with formal training in Design.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hire Faculty in Design</li> </ul>	Director, Stratford School Dean of Arts, SACA	In progress: Hired 4 faculty in Design – 2020-22; will hire one more, 2023-24
11.	Do an inventory on what services would be important for Stratford campus and do those right. For example, does Stratford need some kind of food bank for its students?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct inventory of needed services</li> </ul>	Administrative Officer	Complete - winter 2020

12.	Find some way to provide an introduction of the students to the library. Reinstate library services as part of the orientation program for both undergraduates and masters students. Increase classroom invitations to librarians; explore some librarian office hours on site.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>completed an initial analysis of services and continue to monitor what services are needed as the campus grows</li> </ul>	Administrative Officer	Complete - winter 2020
13.	Increase on-site hours for student counselors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presence of 1 counsellor only due to staffing challenges in Counselling Services</li> <li>Increased online counselling hours.</li> </ul>	Director, Stratford School Counselling Services	Complete - winter 2022
14.	We encourage the School to arrange new spaces for classes, accommodation, and student life. For example, we suggest that the University could support the creation of local student clubs and provide them with space. Provide or support student events that might also attract other students from main campus. We recognize and appreciate that the School and University are already planning to rent more space in Stratford for these purposes and working with a private developer to build apartment spaces appropriate for the students and that can compete with quality of rental accommodation available in Waterloo.	Approval for new student accommodation pending.	Director, Stratford School Administrative Officer Dean of Arts	In progress: TBD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RFP for Prime Consultant March 2023.</li> <li>Awarded Contract (Concept and Costing) to Teeple Architects June 2023.</li> <li>Pre-Design Concept and Cost Estimate Provided December 2023</li> </ul>
15.	For the MDEI candidates, we suggest establishing some course work and formal networking opportunities in Toronto.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop online MDEI.</li> </ul>	Director, Stratford School Curriculum committee Administrative Officer	Complete - 2021-22

16.	Consider development of a research masters and PhD to enrich the curriculum and extend the reach of the program.	Changing the on-campus MDEI program to a hybrid delivery model would also allow us to create space for a research Master's and PhD program	Director, Stratford School, Curriculum committee	In progress: 2023-24 Proposal for MA and PhD in UXRD provided to Dean of Arts September 2023
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The Department Chair/Director, in consultation with the Dean of the Faculty shall be responsible for monitoring the Implementation Plan.

Date of next program review: \_\_\_\_\_ 2025-26  
Date

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Signatures of Approval:



December 20, 2023

Chair/Director

Date

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AFIW Administrative Dean/Head (For AFIW programs only)

Date

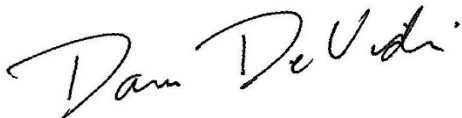


September 6, 2023

Faculty Dean

Date

**Note:** AFIW programs fall under the Faculty of ARTS; however, the Dean does not have fiscal control nor authority over staffing and administration of the program.



October 21, 2022

Associate Vice-President, Academic  
(For undergraduate and augmented programs)

Date

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October 21, 2022

Associate Vice-President, Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs  
(For graduate and augmented programs)

Date