

Final Assessment Report

Theatre and Performance (BA, Minor)

October 2022

Executive Summary

External reviewers found that the Theatre and Performance (BA, Minor) programs delivered by the Department of Communication Arts were in good standing.

Overall, this is a program of good quality that nonetheless faces some important challenges... The principal strength of the program is its performance production endeavours and its expertise in teaching creative processes in devised productions.

A total of 5 recommendations were provided by the reviewers, regarding increasing support for the Arts Co-op Program, improving integration with the Arts and Business program, and placing greater emphasis on learning outcomes related to academic aspects like theatre history, dramatic literature and dramaturgy. In response, the program created a plan outlining the specific actions proposed to address each recommendation as well as a timeline for implementation. The next cyclical review for this program is scheduled for 2026-2027.

Enrollment over the past three years

	Honours	Honours Co-op	Minor
2021-2022	24	9	16
2020-2021	24	10	23
2019-2020	24	7	18

Based on Active Students Extract in Quest, February 4, 2022.

Background

In accordance with the University of Waterloo's Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), this final assessment report provides a synthesis of the external evaluation and the internal response of the Theatre and Performance (BA, Minor) delivered by the Department of Communication Arts. A self-study (Volume I, II, III) was submitted to the Associate Vice-President, Academic on September 3, 2019. The self-study (Volume I) presented the program descriptions and learning outcomes, an analytical assessment of the programs, including the data collected from student and alumni surveys, along with the standard data package prepared by the Office of Institutional Analysis & Planning (IAP). The CVs for each faculty member with a key role in the delivery of the program(s) were included in Volume II of the self-study.

From Volume III, two arm's-length external reviewers were selected by the Associate Vice-President, Academic: Dr. Jenn Stephenson, Dan School of Drama and Music, Queen's University and Dr. Patrick Leroux, Department of English and French, Concordia University.

Reviewers appraised the self-study documentation and conducted a virtual site visit to the University between September 22 and September 25, 2020. An internal reviewer from the University of Waterloo, Dr. Bill Power, Department of Chemistry, was selected to accompany the external reviewers. The visit included interviews with the Associate Vice-President, Academic; Dean of the Faculty of Arts; Faculty Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies; Chair of the Department, as well as faculty members, staff and current undergraduate students. The Review Team also had an opportunity to meet with representatives from the library, and viewed a virtual tour of the Department's facilities.

Following the site visit, the external reviewers submitted a report on their findings, with recommendations. Subsequently, the program responded to each recommendation and outlined a plan for implementation of the recommendations. Finally, the Dean responded to the external reviewers' recommendations, and endorsed the plans outlined by the program.

This final assessment report is based on information extracted, in many cases verbatim, from the self-study, the external reviewers' report, the program response and the Dean's response.

Program Characteristics

The Theatre & Performance program offers an Honours BA and a Minor program. The Honours program can be combined with Arts & Business (either co-op or regular) or Arts coop or with any other major in Arts.

Eligibility for graduation in the Honours Theatre and Performance academic program includes successful completion of the following requirements (Note: requirements changed in Fall 2021):

1. Appropriate Program-level requirements. See [Bachelor of Arts Degree Requirements](#).
2. Theatre and Performance Plan-level requirements:
 - a minimum Theatre and Performance major average of 70%
 - at least eight academic course units (16 courses) in Theatre and Performance, including:
 - [THPERF 100](#), [THPERF 102/SPCOM 102](#), [THPERF 200](#), [THPERF 243](#), [THPERF 244](#), [THPERF 300](#), [THPERF 301](#)
 - one of [THPERF 400](#) or [THPERF 410](#)

Arts and Business (Co-op and Regular)

Students may combine the Honours Theatre and Performance academic program with Arts and Business or Arts coop. In addition to the Honours Theatre and Performance requirements, students must also complete the [Arts and Business requirements/Arts coop requirements](#).

Honours Double Majors

Honours Theatre and Performance may be taken in combination with most Arts majors in which an Honours major is offered or with many Honours majors in other faculties. For further information, see the double majors section of [Available Arts Academic Plans](#).

The Theatre and Performance Minor (called Performance Creation Minor since Fall 2021) requires successful completion of a minimum of four academic course units (eight courses) in Theater and Performance with a minimum cumulative average of 65%, including:

- [THPERF 100](#), [THPERF 102/SPCOM 102](#), [THPERF 200](#), [THPERF 243](#)

Summary of Strengths, Challenges and Weaknesses based on Self-Study

Strengths

- Excellent spaces for student productions and performances (particular HH-180 and the Theatre of the Arts).
- The high quality of productions.
- The combination of theory and practice in the curriculum.
- The extensive collaborative research/work that happens in the Department.
- The high value placed on collegiality and the extensive opportunities for student-faculty interaction.
- The curriculum identifies three areas of concentration (performance/direction, theory/dramaturgy, and production/design), and articulates a progression for students from an introduction to basic concepts, through foundational skill development, application of skills and concepts in faculty-led performance and research projects, to a required capstone project for honours students.
- The program is currently engaged in a public outreach strategy (including strong connection via workshops and various programs of mutual benefit with alumni who currently teach theatre in Waterloo Region high schools, on-campus presence, web presence, and community engagement) designed to better represent the program's research, creative, and teaching strengths.

Challenges/Weaknesses

- The drop in enrollment numbers has created a number of challenges that need to be addressed (including canceling courses). (Up-date: enrollment numbers have been on an increase since 2019.)

- The small and declining number of full-time faculty (five, soon to be four with an impending retirement) and the absence of replacement hires for retired faculty creates increasing strain on remaining full-time faculty. (Up-date: In 2022, two new tenure-track faculty members were hired, one for THPERF, another for THPERF/DAC.)
- AL-6 is an important teaching space, but needs to be renovated. In addition, the Department exists in three separate buildings, and so there is a challenge related to that feeling of being spread out.
- Lack of visibility on campus, and the fact that, in general, the University advertises itself and has an ethos of a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) institution, which makes recruiting students difficult and creates challenges for visibility.
- The program is extremely ambitious even though it has limited resources. How to balance that ambition while delivering practical results remains a challenge.
- The program is hard to define because it is not a traditional conservatory program (i.e., there is no physical training for actors), but it is not exactly a Liberal Arts program either.
- The program's commitments to beauty and justice have not been fully thought through. How might these commitments be articulated more clearly in the curriculum?
- The program's use of guest artists remains both a strength and a challenge. Students learn from professional artists, but those artists are not always a stable presence on campus.

Summary of Key Findings from the External Reviewers

Overall, this is a program of good quality that nonetheless faces some important challenges. The self-study lists a number of strengths and the reviewers' observations on the site visit affirmed these. The principal strength of the program is its performance production endeavours and its expertise in teaching creative processes in devised productions. The program is the beneficiary of exceptionally well-equipped and well-favoured spaces for theatrical performances and production activities. In addition, the faculty and staff who support student production work are committed creative experts. Thus the work that results is of high-quality. (We weren't able to attend a performance ourselves unfortunately, but this assessment is evident to us from the report of those we spoke to. Student and staff/faculty pride in the work is evident.) As a result, the practical work of making theatre takes a central role in the academic journey of students towards their degree in Theatre & Performance. For the most part, this is a strength. Although finding an appropriate balance of practice with more theoretical and traditionally academic learning outcomes is necessary. An offshoot of the preeminence of practical production work is a strong feeling of collegiality; students reported close supportive relationships with their peers as well as with staff/faculty. This is true in general of theatre programs by their nature -- but it is augmented here because of the small cohort size and the blending of students in various years of study into common courses.

Although the emphasis on performance production is clearly a strength of the program as noted, it also speaks to a potential weakness. It appears that a significant proportion of credits earned towards the credential are devoted to practical work at the expense of more academic areas of

study in the field such as theatre history, dramatic literature, and theory. This is attributable to perhaps a number of factors -- primary of which is the small size of the student cohort. The reviewers were told that adjustments are made to keep the workload of mounting productions reasonable to the available student labour, and yet, inevitably production work can be all-consuming, requiring “all hands on deck” participation.

The dropping enrolment trend in this program (that the reviewers found) resulting in very small student cohorts is of central concern as it intersects with a number of other issues. Engaging with this situation will be critical for any recommendations. The self-study and the in-person interviews reveal an intense concern with declining faculty numbers with recent retirements and a lack of replacement. However, it remains an open question given the small enrolment and already excellent faculty-student ratios in classes about whether or not the program indeed requires additional teaching capacity. The program does supplement teaching with adjuncts, and these seem to be appropriately deployed, as they provide diversity of expertise. Often in units with a small faculty complement the distribution of service workload is a challenge; however the Theatre and Performance program has the advantage of being located within the larger administrative unit of the Department of Communication Arts, so this does not seem to be a negative factor.

The self-study lists as one of their concerns that the program is hard to define. As reviewers, we agree that it is a critical challenge for the program to define itself in a unique manner that leans into its authentic strengths and distinctive features. The challenge is not (we think) as the self-study suggests the quintessential question in theatre arts programs concerning the balance of conservatory training versus a liberal arts education. But rather the key question is “Why Waterloo?”

The self-study goes on to seek insight into the integration of co-op into the program as a distinct advantage for students. We agree that this is key. Co-operative educational experiences are top-of-mind when thinking of the University of Waterloo “brand.” And yet, the potential of co-op experience in relation to the Theatre and Performance program is substantially underrealized. And so the connection to the Arts Co-op stream (and also Arts and Business) is both a weakness of the program to be remedied -- but also stands as a significant opportunity to address enrolment challenges and bring greater alignment of practical work versus academic study in the curriculum in support of the overall ‘mission’ of the program goals.

Program Response to External Reviewers’ Recommendations

1. The program should take steps to increase support for the Arts Co-op program option by:

- a. Investigating the feasibility of, and advocating for reconsideration of university parameters for, co-op placements to open opportunities for employers who are not-for-profit organizations and to allow placements that do not conform to current one-term time frames.
- b. Providing for a Co-op coordinator or liaison role within the Theatre and Performance program to foster placement relationships with local arts organizations.
- c. Adapting course offerings across multiple terms to accommodate co-op term rotations.

Response

The Theatre and Performance program acknowledges the increasing importance of co-op education in the Faculty of Arts, with the advent of Arts Co-op, and the opportunity to distinguish Theatre and Performance at Waterloo through co-op. We value co-op employment as a form of experiential learning, integrative learning, and community engagement, all of which are central to our pedagogical approach. As a program, we are committed to supporting our students in securing meaningful Co-op placements that they recognize as relevant to their education and contributing to their employability after graduation. However, based on our past experience, we propose a different approach to achieving this goal than the reviewers recommend, as follows.

The program accepts recommendation (c) as it is articulated, but we are encountering a challenge with the misalignment between the Honours Arts and Honours Arts and Business Co-op work term cycles. We have already mapped our production course offerings to the Arts Co-op work term schedule and are aware that the rotation we have followed in the past would prevent Arts Co-op students from completing required production capstone projects. While we have drafted a possible adjustment to the rotation, it poses different problems for Honours Arts and Business Co-op students. As a result, we will continue to review the cycle of production and other course offerings as part of our overall curriculum review. Please see the explanatory table in Appendix 1, p. 9.

Recommendations (a) and (b) have also already been actively pursued by the program over several years, to support Arts and Business Co-op students majoring in Theatre and Performance. Specifically:

- a) In order to place students in theatre and other arts organizations, we have negotiated exceptions to the usual Co-op parameters, including shorter Co-op placements, combined placements (where a student was employed in more than one organization), and placements with pay rates below minima set by the Co-op office and/or subsidized by a grant from the Chalmers' family. The process of negotiating these placements has involved advocating for the reconsideration of university parameters, and we believe has contributed to the university's current exploration of more flexible parameters specifically designed for Arts Co-op students looking for employment in the not-for-profit sectors. We have found that the feasibility of placements in local and regional arts organizations is dependent not only upon the flexibility of Co-op parameters but also on

the availability of such opportunities in the sector, and on our capacity to support arts organizations in identifying, supervising, and compensating appropriate roles for students. Organizations are generally small, dependent on project-based, rather than operational, funding, and accustomed to occasional and seasonal labour models with little continuity from one season to the next. Opportunities are highly unpredictable even in the largest and most stable of regional arts institutions in which we have placed students (for example, Young People’s Theatre in Toronto).

- b) To date, the role Co-op Placement Co-ordinator has been fulfilled by Janelle Rainville, our Director of Production and Theatre Operations. On average, each individual student placement within local or regional arts organizations takes approximately 6-10 hours to arrange. The bulk of this time is devoted to supporting the hiring organization through the process of developing a position and determining how it will be supervised and compensated (including identifying funding sources).

For the last three years in a row, Janelle has been able to secure arts industry placements for 1 out of 5 co-op work terms for each co-op student in Theatre and Performance. While our approach has been successful in providing meaningful work experiences for some individual students, which they perceive to be valuable learning opportunities and beneficial to their future employability, the process remains so labour-intensive, and its outcome is so unpredictable, that we cannot assure success for the small number of Arts and Business Co-op students we have supported up to now. We do not consider it feasible to increase these efforts to accommodate a larger number of Arts Co-op students. Additionally, we have not found a correlation between arts-related Co-op placements and post-graduation employment in the arts industry for our students; that is, many students without Co-op experience are employed in the theatre industry, and many students are also employed in non-arts sectors.

As an alternative to recommendations (a) and (b), we propose to reconceive the Theatre and Performance program’s relationship to Arts Co-op, with an emphasis on “Faculty of Arts Co-op with a Theatre and Performance Major”, rather than an implied (false) promise of “Theatre Co-op”. We believe this approach would re-direct the enormous energies currently devoted to generating placements for a few individual students towards developing more substantive and reliable support for many more students. After we have completed our current curriculum review, we will:

1. In consultation with the Co-op office and our networks in the not-for-profit sectors, determine the experiential learning outcomes offered by Co-op placements in a variety of sectors (including but not limited to not-for-profit), which differ from, extend, and/or deepen experiential learning outcomes in the Theatre and Performance program.
2. In consultation with the Co-op office and our networks in the not-for-profit sectors, determine the competencies developed in Theatre and Performance courses that distinguish our students from majors in other programs.

3. Work with the Co-op office to establish relationships with arts industry organizations so that the co-op office can maintain those relationships moving forward, and support THPERF students in securing placements. One option we would like to explore is establishing a liaison for the THPERF program from within Co-op.
4. In consultation with the co-op office and Arts recruitment, develop messaging for use in recruitment and student orientation that clearly communicate what students can expect from an Arts Co-op experience with a Theatre and Performance Major at Waterloo.

Dean's Response

No further comment, beyond pointing out that the Faculty of Arts has designated "Co-op for Social Good" as one of its fundraising priorities. The purpose is to raise sufficient funds to assist not-for-profit organizations, including those in the arts sector, in employing co-op students.

2. The program should make curricular changes that improve integration with the business side of the Arts + Business program Option. Potential course offerings in arts management, producing, arts marketing, etc., would be steps towards this goal.

Response

The Theatre and Performance program agrees that exploring possibilities for collaboration with the Arts and Business program may be productive. However, we are cautious about adding more courses to our current list of offerings. We currently offer two courses in arts management, THPERF 248 Project Management in the Arts (recently revised for the 2021-22 academic calendar) and THPERF 343 Stage Management, which cover all areas of producing, management, and event planning (including financial management and human resource management) not already covered by ARBUS courses (in which marketing is well represented). Since we are dependent upon sessional instructors to deliver these courses, and low enrolments have meant we have not been able to offer them consistently, we do not see an advantage in increasing the number of courses at this stage. Instead, we would welcome including them in the list of courses that fulfill Arts and Business requirements, working with ARBUS to ensure these courses fulfill ARBUS needs (and revising if/as necessary), and discussing other ways in which Arts and Business students might benefit from Theatre and Performance courses. In response to this recommendation, after we have completed our current curriculum review, we will initiate a discussion with Arts and Business about possible collaborations between the two programs.

Dean's Response

Some years ago Arts and Business, and its predecessor, Applied Studies, featured a Specialization in Cultural Management. Although it was a worthy program, it was eventually closed down because of lack of student enrolments. Perhaps the time has come for a revisioning of such a program; if so, THPERF should work closely with partners, both internal and external, in order to avoid the possible pitfalls of the earlier program and to identify new directions that such an initiative might take.

- 3. The program should, perhaps with the support of CTE, engage program stakeholders in a curriculum mapping exercise that places production at the core and considers how the program learning outcomes are realized through production. The “bundling” of not only practice-based learning outcomes but also learning outcomes pertaining to more academic aspects like theatre history, dramatic literature, dramaturgy and theory, in alignment with the creation of performance, would allow the program to fulfill its outcomes with a small cohort of students and reducing the need to offer many distinct courses.**

Response

As described in our introductory comments above, the Theatre and Performance program agrees that a comprehensive curriculum review is needed, and the program is currently engaged in that review. We agree that the core pedagogical and program delivery question raised by the reviewers in this recommendation is central, i.e. the relative weight and distribution among required courses of practice-based and traditional academic knowledges, competencies, and learning activities. We also appreciate the recommendation to seek support from the Centre for Teaching Excellence (CTE), and will do so as our current review proceeds. At this stage in the review process, we are already conscious that the Theatre and Performance program is under-resourced in two areas crucial to the integration of practice-based and more traditional learning activities, especially as remote learning continues. Audio-visual production equipment and software licenses (such as Adobe Creative Cloud) are prohibitively expensive for students to acquire individually and will need to be sustainably funded in future.

In addition, we appreciate the reviewers’ intention to help concentrate the numbers of our students into fewer classes, thereby increasing enrolments in individual classes and preventing course cancellations. However, over the last several years, offering too many courses has not been a problem; on the contrary, we have not been able even to offer the basic minimum of 8 academic units required to complete the Theatre and Performance honours plan. If we wished to reduce the number of Theatre and Performance courses we needed to offer, we would need to reduce the number of THPERF units required by replacing some THPERF courses in our plans with “approved” courses offered by other programs. We will explore this possibility towards the end of our review process, when we are mapping new curricular learning outcomes to existing plans and courses, and revising them.

Dean’s Response

No further comment.

- 4. The program should ensure that there are regular offerings of courses and selection of performance texts that address or “speak to” “canonical” repertoire and increase student knowledge of “core” literary and socio-historical context in the field of theatre studies.**

Response

The Theatre and Performance program agrees that foundational canonical content, which operates as reference points through which students can develop basic knowledge and analytical skills, and on which they can begin to exercise critical judgment and creative adaptation, has been lacking in our program since 2014. As before, we are cautious about adding courses to our current roster. However, we will explore the possibilities for distributing this content among required courses towards the end of our review process, when we are mapping new curricular learning outcomes to existing plans and courses, and revising them.

Increasing the THPERF program's offerings in these areas will create a new need for relevant library (text and audio-visual) resources. The existing Theatre and Performance collections related to the canon are heavily dependent on the holdings at Guelph University, where they are also in regular use; this makes it difficult for Waterloo students and faculty to access them. Other kinds of research resources (especially design and theatre technology journals and performance archives) are lacking altogether, and the time needed to secure permissions to circulate digitized course materials on an ad hoc basis are preventatively long. As a result, the program will need support from the Dean of Arts to expand collections.

Dean's Response

There has as yet been no discussion with the Dean's office about increased collections support, nor is there any reference to the Dean under #4 in the implementation plan. Nevertheless, while we are still facing fiscal constraints that prohibit us from providing programs with ideal resource levels, we are open to having a conversation. We would be happy also to assist THPERF in finding innovative methods of collaboration/sharing with other units (e.g., FINE) and in addressing processes that are hindering effective use of materials.

5. The program should investigate options for and consider the advantages of program staff assuming formal teaching roles (in areas such as production skills, design, and production/design history) to take advantage of existing instructional expertise in the program and expand course offerings.

Response

The Theatre and Performance program agrees that our program staff are exceptionally qualified and capable instructors, and that students already benefit significantly from their expertise in course labs and productions. As above, we are cautious about expanding course offerings, given the low enrolments in existing courses, and have some reservations about the workloads for staff that would result in expanding their responsibilities in this way. However, we do see possibilities for changes in the roles of Head of Wardrobe and Technical Director, and will explore new possibilities for delivering content that can be taught by program staff towards the end of our

curriculum review process, when we are mapping new learning outcomes to existing plans and courses, and revising them.

Dean's Response

No further comment.

Recommendations Not Selected for Implementation

N/A

Implementation Plan

	Recommendations	Proposed Actions	Responsibility for Leading and Resourcing (if applicable) the Actions	Timeline for addressing Recommendations
1.	<p>The program should take steps to increase support for the Arts Co-op program option by:</p> <p>a. Investigating the feasibility of, and advocating for reconsideration of university parameters for, co-op placements to open opportunities for employers who are not-for-profit organizations and to allow placements that do not conform to current one-term time frames.</p> <p>b. Providing for a Co-op coordinator or liaison role within the Theatre and Performance program to foster placement relationships with local arts organizations.</p> <p>c. Adapting course offerings across multiple terms to accommodate co-op term rotations.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In consultation with the Co-op office and our networks in the not-for-profit sectors, determine the experiential learning outcomes offered by co-op placements in a variety of sectors (including but not limited to not-for-profit), which differ from, extend, and/or deepen experiential learning outcomes in the Theatre and Performance program. 2. In consultation with the Co-op office and our networks in the not-for-profit sectors, determine the competencies developed in Theatre and Performance courses that distinguish THPERF students from majors in other programs. 3. Work with the Co-op office to establish relationships with arts industry organizations so that the co-op office can maintain those relationships moving forward, and support THPERF students in securing placements. One option we would like to explore is establishing a 	Chair and Associate Chair (Theatre and Performance)	By 2025-26

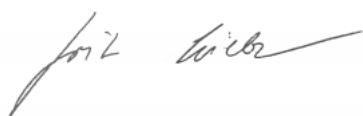
		<p>liaison for the THPERF program from within Co-op.</p> <p>In consultation with the co-op office and Arts recruitment, develop messaging for use in recruitment and student orientation that clearly communicate what students can expect from an Arts Co-op experience with a Theatre and Performance Major at Waterloo.</p>		
2.	<p>The program should make curricular changes that improve integration with the business side of the Arts + Business program Option. Potential course offerings in arts management, producing, arts marketing, etc., would be steps towards this goal.</p>	<p>Initiate a discussion with Arts and Business about possible collaborations between the two programs, potentially revisiting a “Specialization in Cultural Management”.</p>	<p>Associate Chair, Theatre and Performance</p>	<p>By 2025-26</p>
3.	<p>The program should, perhaps with the support of CTE, engage program stakeholders in a curriculum mapping exercise that places production at the core and considers how the program learning outcomes are realized through production. The “bundling” of not only practice-based learning outcomes but also learning outcomes pertaining to more academic aspects like theatre history, dramatic literature, dramaturgy and theory, in alignment with the creation of performance, would allow the program to fulfill its outcomes with a small cohort of</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Comprehensive review of curriculum, centering core pedagogical values and EDI, exploring co-op, and determining feasibility based on faculty and staff expertise. ● Continue to consult with Equity Office. <p>Initiate consultation with Centre for Teaching Excellence.</p>	<p>Chair, Theatre and Performance curriculum committee, Associate Chair, Theatre and Performance</p>	<p>By 2025-26</p>

	students and reducing the need to offer many distinct courses.			
4.	The program should ensure that there are regular offerings of courses and selection of performance texts that address or “speak to” “canonical” repertoire and increase student knowledge of “core” literary and socio-historical context in the field of theatre studies.	As part of the curriculum review in (3), distribute this content among required courses.	Chair, Theatre and Performance curriculum committee, with Associate Chair, Theatre and Performance	Ongoing, and as part of curriculum review (recommendation 3)
	The program should investigate options for and consider the advantages of program staff assuming formal teaching roles (in areas such as production skills, design, and production/design history) to take advantage of existing instructional expertise in the program and expand course offerings.	As part of the curriculum review in (3), explore new possibilities for delivering content that can be taught by program staff.	Chair, Theatre and Performance curriculum committee, with Associate Chair, Theatre and Performance	Ongoing, with consideration of formal revision to staff roles in 2025-2026

The Department Chair/Director, in consultation with the Dean of the Faculty shall be responsible for the Implementation Plan.

Date of next program review _____ **2026-2027**
Date

Signatures of Approval



04 October, 2022

Chair/Director _____ Date

AFIW Administrative Dean/Head (*For AFIW programs only*) _____ Date



17/01/2023

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.



June 10, 2022

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

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