Annual Academic Assessment Report Cover Sheet

Assessment reports are due the 1st Wednesday after the Fall Term

Email to: assessment@unlv.edu

Program Information:

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<th>Program Assessed</th>
<th>Film BA</th>
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<td>Department</td>
<td>Department of Film</td>
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<td>College</td>
<td>Fine Arts</td>
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<td>Date Submitted</td>
<td>10/30/2017</td>
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Contact Person for This Report

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Please attach a narrative (not to exceed 4 pages, excluding appendices) addressing the following:

- What are the student learning outcomes? Please provide a numbered list.
- Which learning outcomes were assessed?
- How were they assessed? (Programs must use at least one direct assessment of student learning.)
- Undergraduate programs should assess at least one University Undergraduate Learning Outcome (UULO) each year, which may or may not overlap with a program learning outcome.
- Graduate programs should assess at least one outcome related to one of the following graduate level requirements each year:
  - student engagement in research, scholarship, creative expression and/or appropriate high-level professional practice.
  - activities requiring originality, critical analysis and expertise.
  - the development of extensive knowledge in the field under study.
- What was learned from the assessment results?
- How did the program respond to what was learned?

Please limit the narrative portion of your report to no more than four pages. You may attach appendices with data, tables, charts, or other materials as needed. Please explain the relevant conclusions from any appendices in your narrative. Please contact the Office of Academic Assessment if you have questions or need assistance.
PROGRAM FOCUS

The Department of Film at UNLV cultivates students' potential as creative artists, critical thinkers, skilled practitioners, and ethical professionals. In our undergraduate program, students master the psychology and technology of visual storytelling, with keen attention to its roots in emotional truth. They are challenged with innovative training in directing, signature screenwriting approaches, the latest cinematography techniques, cutting-edge nonlinear solutions, and interactive courses in film history, theory, and criticism.

Our program gives students the tools and knowledge they need to succeed in an entry-level position in the film industry. Once required courses are complete, students can select track electives to specialize in the area of their choice and prepare themselves to pursue careers as cinematographers, critics, directors, editors, historians, screen actors, producers, screenwriters, or professional crew.

Students are also equipped to seek a graduate degree in a top-tier program that matches their professional goals, whether those involve production or research. If their interest is in screenwriting, they can apply to the Department of Film’s highly selection Master of Fine Arts program in Writing for Dramatic Media, a three-year program that funds all admitted students with graduate assistantships that cover tuition and living costs.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of the Bachelor of Arts in Film the student should be able to:

- Identify Film History in Context. Distinguish major figures instrumental in the creation of world cinema and distinguish different film genres, film forms, national cinemas, and their production and distribution systems.
- Comprehend Film Language. Communicate cinematic language in terms of the art and craft of cinema including: mise-en-scène, cinematography, editing, sound, acting, directing, narrative storytelling, documentary, film criticism and film theory.
- Analyze Screen Stories. Recognize and discuss strengths and weaknesses with structural elements of a cinematic story.
- Apply Film Research. Use library resources; search the Internet, and an understanding of a foreign language sufficiently to conduct emphasis-appropriate research in their selected field of cinema.
- Write Filmic Analysis. Implement the terms taught and apply them to any discussion and assignment of the field of cinema.
- Synthesize Filmmaking Fundamentals. Construct film essays, write in proper screenplay format, and exhibit competence in the creation of short films.
- Execute Film Response & Criticism. Evaluate films and screenplays and communicate through critical writing and oral response.
- Determine Track Specializations. Select with a faculty advisor to focus on one of these areas: Film history, screen performance, production methods, and screenwriting. Proactive meetings with the faculty professional will allow the students to tailor seven track electives to meet their needs, interests, and career goals.
ASSESSMENT METHOD

Students who graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Film in December 2016 and May 2017 were invited to complete an anonymous Qualtrics survey requesting open-ended feedback on their learning outcomes in the Department of Film, considering both regular course offerings and extracurricular activities.

Students were contacted a minimum of three (3) times with an invitation to participate. The individuals contacted included sixty-four (64) Bachelor of Arts graduates.

Thirty-one percent (33%) of students completed the survey (N = 21). Not all students responded to every item, however.

Thus the sample is limited but it does offer a cross-section of opinions from recent graduates focusing on a variety of career tracks in the film discipline.

RESULTS & ANALYSIS

Timely degree completion (N = 20): Seventy-six percent (76%) of students reported finishing their degrees in 4.5 years or less, with sixty-two percent (62%) taking 4 years or less. RPC efforts in the Department of Film must focus on identifying the reason(s) that nearly forty-percent (40%) of our students are taking more than four years to finishing their degrees. Anecdotal evidence suggests that work schedules, family responsibilities, and financial duress are crucial factors.

Degree of rigor: (N = 21): Fifty-seven percent (57%) of respondents described their film courses as “challenging,” or “moderately challenging,” but the remaining forty-three percent (43%) rated them as “moderately easy” or “easy.” A review of course syllabi, including all assigned work, is in order to determine whether the level of rigor in Department of Film courses is appropriate.

Most helpful courses (N = 19): The most helpful courses in the curriculum identified by the respondents included Production I, Cinematography I, and Advanced Directing, because these courses “gave insight into the overall production of film,” allowed students to “learn how to tell a story visually,” and provided them an opportunity to work with “actors, production designers, and cinematographers to recreate scenes from different movie scripts.” In general, studies-oriented courses (history, theory, and criticism) received less frequent mention, but this may be because most students plan on pursuing production-related careers and value courses with a practical, technical focus.

Career track (N = 20): Acting – 5%, Cinematography – 20%, Directing – 20%, Editing – 10%, Producing – 5%, Professional crew – 10%, Screenwriting – 15%, Other (Writing/Directing) – 5%, and No specific focus – 10%. It is notable that no students identified the History or Criticism career track, though these were options in the survey.

Suggested area of instruction (N = 16): By far, the most frequent suggestion was that the Department of Film consider incorporating more training in sound design & production. Sample comments: “We need more about sound production, definitely” and “Music was almost never discussed in any UNLV Film class.” Students also indicated that they would like more instruction in film distribution and exhibition, especially in regard to entering their work in festivals.

Most helpful extra-curricular activities (N = 16): The most frequently mentioned items were the 48 Hour Film Fest and Spring Flicks, both of which are annual festivals sponsored by the Department of Film. Students also praised the value of internships, attending the Sundance Film Festival, and
participating in shooting scenes for Advanced Directing workshops, even if they were not registered in the course.

Career preparation (N = 20): Sixty percent (60%) of students indicated that they were “satisfied” or “moderately satisfied” with their career preparation, while thirty-five percent (35%) felt “moderately dissatisfied” and five percent (5%) were “unsatisfied.” Thus a significant percentage of our graduates may not feel adequately prepared for an entry-level career in film.

Proudest achievement (N = 17): Students were proud of collaborating on projects both inside and outside of class, writing feature-length scripts, and submitting their films to festivals (at UNLV and elsewhere). They were also proud of finishing the program with a high GPA.

General comments (N = 17): Students described the environment as supportive and friendly, but would appreciate it if professors would more frequently reach out to students to check on their progress. Students would like to see more mentorship and guidance for submitting their work to festivals and competitions. They also feel that greater differentiation between film courses, more focus on technical skills, and a requirement to take a course in every area of specialty (cinematography, editing, directing, etc) would be helpful.

ACTION PLAN

This is the first year that UNLV Film has conducted a senior exit survey. The responses we received represent thoughtful feedback from twenty-one (21) of our most recent graduates, individuals who have a valuable perspective on key aspects of our program.

The statistics and themes that emerged suggest that action steps for the Department of Film should include the following in order to improve students’ achievement of learning outcomes:

1) A review of the Bachelor of Arts in Film curriculum to assess its level of rigor and the degree of differentiation between courses. The faculty will conduct this review at its first annual retreat, planned for November 2017.

2) An assessment of career preparation practices, as many students may feel inadequately prepared. This will consist of a follow-up Qualtrics survey to all professors and instructors inviting specific feedback on practical steps that may be taken to improve our performance in this area.

3) Better mentorship for students seeking to submit their work to film festivals outside of UNLV. For 2017-2018, we will schedule two informational meetings each semester to provide guidance for students interested in film festival submission. We are also developing a list of key festivals for student work.

4) An additional faculty line in sound production & design. We submitted a request for this line in Spring 2017 and will re-submit in Spring 2018.

5) We will conduct further exit surveys to determine whether the responses we received in 2017 are anomalous or indicative of ongoing patterns.

Respectfully submitted,

Heather Addison
Chair and Professor
UNLV Department of Film