

Internal Academic Review 2008-2009

School of Music Internal Academic Review Committee Report to Senate

The Internal Academic Review (IAR) of the School of Music is now complete. The Internal Academic Review Committee (IARC) has taken into consideration all of the submissions related to the IAR of the School of Music and respectfully submits the following report. The IARC Report to Senate is intended to supplement the findings of the attached Review Team Report and to provide a mechanism for the Acting Director of the School of Music and the Associate Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science to jointly report on the progress in addressing the Review Team recommendations (please see the “Outcomes” section of this report).

Summary of the Internal Academic Review of the School of Music

It is clear from the submissions relating to the Internal Academic Review of the School of Music that the BMus degree program, in its present configuration, is in peril. The message from external and internal academic reviewers is consistent and pessimistic notwithstanding valiant efforts by members of the School to rectify the situation.

The current climate of fiscal constraints places the Faculty of Arts and Science in a situation where it is unable or unwilling to infuse additional resources into the School to support the BMus degree program, thus rendering the current delivery of the program unsustainable. Regardless of recent changes to the curriculum, the School still finds itself in a position where serious academic restructuring must be instituted to match available resources. The School’s mission has been described as “unfocused”; faculty with unique expertise have administrative burdens that prevent them from teaching; classes are becoming too large to be taught effectively and funding for current goals is inadequate. If the current situation persists, the School’s ability to attract excellent students (including concurrent education students enrolled in the BMus/BEd program) will be impaired significantly. This will further erode morale amongst faculty and staff.

The IARC acknowledges the School of Music’s high visibility within the Kingston community, and that it contributes measurably to our city’s cultural life. The School should also be commended for its dedication to professional instruction and the individual attention it provides to its students. With the opening of the new *Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts*, which will provide world-class performance space for the School of Music and other creative arts departments, interest in the School of Music will undoubtedly increase.

The IARC encourages the School of Music to consult with the Centre for Teaching and Learning and other appropriate resources to investigate possible alternative delivery mechanisms for existing degrees, or to revise degree requirements and course structures to better align with available resources. Further, the IARC implores the School of Music to work collaboratively with the Faculty of Arts and Science to address the many challenges facing the School head-on.

The IARC recognizes the difficult situation that the School of Music is currently experiencing and suggests that the situation requires more active monitoring than that which the usual academic review cycle affords.

**Outcomes of the Internal Academic Review of the
School of Music**

*Joint response submitted by the
Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science and the
Director of the School of Music*

We would like to thank the external reviewers and the Internal Academic Review Team for their work and for their insightful comments and suggestions. Our response is a summary of these assessments, with an emphasis on key concerns.

The Faculty of Arts and Science and the School of Music are gratified to see that the School of Music was praised on many accounts. Throughout their reports, the assessors emphasized the “extraordinary contribution” of the School to both Queen’s University and the community at large. The IARC report also acknowledged the School of Music’s importance to the cultural life of Kingston and praised the School for its “dedication to professional instruction”, for “the individual attention it provides to its students”, and drew attention to music’s “long intellectual history” and “irreducible skill set” (pp. 3, 5).

The Faculty of Arts and Science supports the School of Music’s dedication to surviving the current crisis and to maintaining existing degree programs in music. The School recognizes that its existing situation is unsustainable and that its future, perhaps in a School or a Faculty of Fine Arts, will entail curricular restructuring. Although the School’s response to the current financial situation focuses on external donations and course suspensions, the School’s plans for the future need to look forward to its new facilities on the proposed Fine Arts Campus in the Isabel Bader Performing Arts Centre.

The first step towards restructuring entails re-examining the School’s mission, its place within Queen’s, and its standing among other Bachelor of Music programmes at Ontario Universities. In response to the concern of the IARC that the School of Music’s mission is “unclear”, a departmental retreat in early September will initiate a process of examination and regeneration. It is also imperative that the School rethinks the BMus from the ground up, potentially in the multidisciplinary context of a Faculty of Fine Arts.

In response to the secondary recommendations in the report from the IAR Committee, the School of Music is moving on the recommendation that its larger ensembles be opened to non-music concentrators for credit. A proposal will be submitted to Curriculum Committee this fall. The School also has a new trust fund specifically for small ensembles and coaching and it has already altered its instrumental techniques courses to address the need for introductory conducting, more instrument pedagogy, and reduced teaching loads. The potential for the Conservatory to enhance the music education programme has only begun to be explored and must be a crucial part of the design of a sustainable Music program. The Faculty and the School of Music continue to promote gender equity and are pleased to report that the School of Music now has the first female full professor in its history and also its first female Director.

The School of Music is committed to surviving the current crisis, flourishing in not only what will be a new venue, but also in what will be new ways of disseminating one of the most fundamental forms of human intelligence. The Faculty of Arts and Science and the School of Music are dedicated to working not only to preserve, but to foster music as a vital part of higher education at Queen's.