

FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

Institutional Quality Assurance Program (IQAP) Review

Communication, New Media, and Cultural Studies Ph.D.

Date of Review: May 6th and 7th, 2025

In accordance with the University Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), this final assessment report provides a synthesis of the external evaluation and the internal response and assessments of the Communication, New Media, and Cultural Studies Ph.D. This report identifies the significant strengths of the program, together with opportunities for program improvement and enhancement, and it sets out and prioritizes the recommendations that have been selected for implementation.

The report includes an Implementation Plan that identifies who will be responsible for approving the recommendations set out in the Final Assessment Report; who will be responsible for providing any resources entailed by those recommendations; any changes in organization, policy or governance that will be necessary to meet the recommendations and who will be responsible for acting on those recommendations; and timelines for acting on and monitoring the implementation of those recommendations.

Executive Summary of the Review

In accordance with the Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), the Communication, New Media, and Cultural Studies program submitted a self-study in February 2025 to the Vice-Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies to initiate the cyclical program review of its program. The approved self-study presented program descriptions, learning outcomes, and analyses of data provided by the Office of Institutional Research and Analysis. Appendices to the self-study contained the CVs for each full-time member in the department.

Two arm's length external reviewers and one internal reviewer were endorsed by the Dean, Faculty of Humanities, and selected by the Vice-Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies. The review team reviewed the self-study documentation and then conducted a hybrid review to McMaster University on May 6th and 7th, 2025. The review included interviews with the Deputy Provost; Faculty Dean, Vice-Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies, Associate Dean, Grad Studies and Research, Chair of the department and meetings with groups of current students, full-time faculty and support staff.

The Chair of the department and the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities submitted responses to the Reviewers' Report (February and March 2026 respectively). Specific recommendations

were discussed and clarifications and corrections were presented. Follow-up actions and timelines were included.

Strengths

- **From Executive Summary**

- “successful in providing an innovative, pedagogically thoughtful, and academically successful graduate experience”
- “very responsive to student feedback and has worked diligently to provide a unique training and research context in which both traditional and alternative research approaches, diversity and accessibility, and novel forms of research dissemination and engagement are valued.”
- “provides an interdisciplinary framework through which advanced graduate level work in research-creation, community engagement, media arts practice, and critical communication, new media, and cultural studies research can be undertaken with the supervision of faculty who are research-active [and] prominent in their fields”
- “Faculty associated with the program have had great success securing national and international research grants and have very strong records of scholarly activity.”
- “closely aligned with McMaster’s Institutional Priorities and Strategic Framework and the Ontario’s Strategic Mandate Agreement (SMA3)” in its emphasis on interdisciplinarity, developing professional skills, offering experiential opportunities, and teaching innovation”
- “curriculum demonstrates the program’s commitment to rigour and innovation and features opportunities for students to pursue modalities of research-creation, media arts practice, and more conventional critical work in the three fields integrated under its umbrella”: communication studies, new media, and cultural studies
- “Course offerings are topical, current, highlight the research expertise of participating faculty, and provide the foundation for students to contribute scholarship that is original, innovative, and rigorous”
- Attracting “increasingly strong students”; “a desirable destination for students undertaking advanced interdisciplinary work in research-creation, media arts practice, and critical communication, new media, and cultural studies research.”
- “reviewers endorse and commend CNMCS’s decision to seek improvements to time-to-completion through modifications to the Pro-Seminars, Colloquium, and Qualifying Dossier rather than reductions to program requirements”

- **From 2. Program**

- “The program is well designed to meet and exceed Graduate Degree Level Expectations (GDLEs)”

- “The recently introduced program colloquium helps to enhance knowledge of forms of scholarly knowledge production and mobilization”
- “taken together, the program components, faculty mentorship, access to training in media arts and research-creation, and innovative curricular components such as the qualifying dossier furnish students with unique opportunities designed to equip students with scholarly and professional skills in a wide range of academic and non-academic careers.”
- “The CNMCS program’s dedication to engaging and respecting diverse perspectives and ways of knowing is deeply shaped by the research interests and expertise of its faculty. The principles of inclusive excellence are reflected in faculty research outputs... as well as in the program’s curriculum, which integrates EDIA principles throughout course content and activities.”
- **From 4. Curriculum**
 - “Key program innovations, such as the Qualifying Dossier and research-creation and arts-practice alternatives to the traditional dissertation set the program apart.”
- **From 7. Quality Indicators**
 - “In interviews with reviewers and feedback provided in the graduate survey, students expressed overwhelming satisfaction with the supervisory support they received, identifying it as “top-notch,” “unwavering,” and “crucial” to the development of their research. They were similarly enthusiastic in their praise of faculty members, describing them as highly approachable, deeply engaged, and highly supportive of their research and well-being.”

Opportunities for Improvement and Enhancement

- Graduate funding
 - “Reviewers recognize graduate funding as a priority area in need of improvement, noting its close connection to time-to-completion and student well-being. Insufficient funding, and the corresponding need for CNMCS students to seek outside employment, are key factors affecting students’ ability to meaningfully engage with doctoral-level research and complete their degrees on time. **The program’s current four-year funding package is among the lowest in Canada** and significantly underestimates both the median time-to-completion for students in Humanities doctoral programs and the high cost of living in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area.”

- Lower funding makes the program less competitive at attracting top candidates and also limits the program’s ability to deliver on its commitment to EDIA and McMaster’s institutional goal of Inclusive Excellence.”
- Physical and human resources
 - “while CNMCS students have shared access to departmental and university resources for arts-based research, restrictions on the use of these spaces render them inadequate for the demands of doctoral-level research. Program-dedicated physical and technological resources are essential to meaningfully support high-quality, graduate-level research-creation. The current practice of allocating space annually in the Faculty of Humanities significantly hinders the program’s ability to develop and maintain the necessary infrastructure. In the absence of adequate dedicated resources, the program relies on the generosity and resourcefulness of CSMA faculty to fill critical gaps—an arrangement that places undue strain on both personnel and existing facilities. The lack of secure studio and on-campus exhibition spaces poses major barriers to student progress and timely completion. Additionally, reviewers expressed health and safety concerns regarding the location and air quality of the studio spaces currently assigned to research-creation students.”
- Status and future of the program given a trend of reduced resources from the Department of English and Cultural Studies
 - “This shift raises concerns about the sustainability of current curriculum delivery—particularly in relation to course availability and the core theory requirement—as well as the long-term impact on CNMCS programming in light of upcoming faculty retirements” in both ECS and CSMA.
 - “Additionally, the renaming of the ECS doctoral program to ‘English and Cultural Studies’ introduces the potential for internal competition between two PhD programs with overlapping Cultural Studies mandates, contributing to student confusion and loss of program coherence.”
 - “In light of these developments, reviewers recommend that CSMA use this moment to conduct a realistic and forward-looking assessment of the CNMCS program’s identity, curricular structure, and future hiring needs. We encourage continued collegial dialogue between CSMA and ECS to clarify the relationship between the departments and to thoughtfully consider the viability and role of Cultural Studies within the CNMCS program. Such conversations, grounded in the departments’ strong history of collaboration, will be essential to ensuring the program’s coherence, distinctiveness, and long-term sustainability.”

Summary of the Reviewers' Recommendations with the Department's and Dean's Responses

NOTE: The numbering (e.g. 2a etc.) of the recommendations below matches the Section #s from the External Reviewers' Report. Sequential numbering of below recommendations not advised.

Program

Recommendation 2a: Continue to emphasize the importance of CNMCS's interdisciplinarity and creative modes of knowledge production and dissemination through research creation to the university's mission to "to train students to be experts in teaching, research, and scholarship, specifically by engaging critical and multimodal approaches toward discovery and problem solving, and by fostering diverse ways of knowing"

Department's Response and Actions to be Taken: We agree that it is important to continue to communicate the importance of our program's interdisciplinary, creative, and research creation to the university's mission.

We believe the best way to do this is by amplifying the work being done by CNMCS students on our website and in other communications. With the end of funding for a PR RA, we have been struggling to find ways to fund a student to work on department communications, including updating grad student profiles on our website and communicating about department research/creation via social media, video shorts, and stories. We would appreciate support from the Faculty of Humanities Dean's office in our departmental communications.

Dean's Response:

The dean did not prohibit the hiring of a student to support departmental communications. Rather, the use of an RA-in-lieu for this purpose was ended, as 133 hours per term at the TA-rate is not necessary for a single department's PR, nor is it equitable to the TAs in the department. If the department would like to hire a student for this purpose, they should reach out to the DoFA, who will provide them with an appropriate JD.

McMaster's current strategic planning process may lead to more structures to support and value interdisciplinary work. CNMCS is key example of such work that is already taking place at Mac. I am also pleased that CSMA's relationship with the School of the Arts has been deepening, which could also lead to further research creation opportunities for CNMCS students.

Recommendation 2b: We encourage the university administration to support the success and long-term viability of CNMCS through actively supporting and elevating it as an exemplar of advanced teaching and research that champions interdisciplinarity, development of professional skills and

competencies both within and outside of traditional scholarly production, centring experiential learning opportunities and teaching innovation, and making significant strides toward inclusive excellence.

Department's Response and Actions to be Taken: We support this recommendation and are happy to collaborate with the Humanities Dean's Office and others in supporting and elevating our work.

One idea is to profile our students (and faculty) in the Humanities Faculty Friday newsletter and to collaborate on other communications strategies (see our response to 2a).

Dean's Response: Happy to support the promotion of the program and its students.

Recommendation 2c: Maintain the program's supportive environment to foster student well-being, including the work of community building across student cohorts.

Department's Response and Actions to be Taken: We appreciate the reviewers' acknowledgement of the work we have already done, as well as their encouragement to continue our efforts.

In 2025-26, we have continued our department colloquiums and to follow these with a modest catered meal (recognizing the community building role of eating together). Our students have also continued their peer-mentorship program. We are also committed to keeping the lines of communication open with graduate student reps and leadership in order to support student-initiated cohort-building efforts.

Dean's Response:

In September 2025, the Faculty of Humanities organized its first-ever grad student orientation. The aim was to find a venue to build community among all grad students in the Faculty and to make sure they are all aware of the resources on campus to support wellbeing and academic success. We plan to continue this effort.

Recommendation 2d: Conduct a realistic and forward-looking assessment of the CNMCS program's identity, curricular structure, and future hiring needs in light of ECS' incremental disengagement from the program. See Recommendation 8c. below.

Department's Response and Actions to be Taken: CSMA has deeply appreciated the collaboration of ECS, which has played a crucial role in the success of the joint CNMCS program, especially in its early years. The withdrawal of support reflects the realities of a declining faculty complement in ECS and the limited numbers of faculty available to play a role in the administration of the CNMCS program. Meanwhile, however, ECS continues to prioritize enrolling CNMCS students in its courses and several ECS faculty continue to be involved in PhD supervision.

Over the next 18 months, CSMA proposes to a) conduct an audit of our course offerings and associate faculty complement; b) engage in conversation with our ECS colleagues about the nature of our departments' collaborations at the graduate level, including the administration and design of CNMCS and reciprocal associate member designations; c) hold a retreat to discuss our curriculum structure, identity, and future hiring needs; and d) to explore synergies with other Faculty of Humanities departments, such as SOTA, and individual faculty members.

Dean's Response:

This internal audit makes sense. I encourage the CSMA chair to include the ADGSR in some of this work. There would be benefits to having the conversation about cross-departmental supervision and shared courses take place across more departments than just ECS and CSMA. We are already working on some standardizing of processes, timetables, TA hiring, etc.

Admission and Program Requirements

Recommendation 3a: Consider expanding consultation for the admissions process in order to assess applications from non-traditional learners or arts-practitioners and to support the assessment of alternative admissions requirements to promote equity and accessibility.

Department's Response and Actions to be Taken: We agree that our admissions process is due for review.

Over the next 18 months, we plan to conduct an environmental scan of the admissions practices of other Humanities and Social Sciences PhD programs in consultation with the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies. We will use this information to inform revisions to our admissions process that emphasize greater consultation, transparency, equity, and accessibility. We aim to pilot our new admissions procedure for the 2027 admissions cycle and to conduct a debrief afterward so that we can iterate for the future.

Dean's Response:

This sounds like a good plan. Again, it would be valuable for such conversations to happen across departments. If we are thinking about how to make admissions more open to non-traditional learners, we should also be considering how we can make the programs (post-admission) similarly accessible.

Recommendation 4a: Update calendar language to reflect recent changes to theory/methodology requirements.

Department's Response and Actions to be Taken: The calendar language has been updated, so no further action is needed here.

Dean's Response:

Completed.

Recommendation 4b: Investigate the possibility of offering a media production course annually.

Department's Response and Actions to be Taken: Our department already offers two media production courses a year (one in each semester), and many other courses include media production projects.

We will endeavor to better communicate with students about our media production offerings when we send them the yearly course list.

Dean's Response:

Sounds good.

Recommendation 4c: Provide applicants and incoming students with a list of upcoming courses that is prominently displayed on the program website as soon as these are formalized.

Department's Response and Actions to be Taken: We agree that this is an excellent idea and will begin doing this in 2026. In addition, we will encourage provisional supervisors to help their incoming supervisees determine the most relevant courses for their program of study.

Dean's Response:

No concerns.

Recommendation 4d: Encourage instructors to provide more breadth, contextualization, and background on the fields their courses engage to promote expanded knowledge alongside the deeper dives that courses designed around particular areas within fields permit.

Department's Response and Actions to be Taken: Many instructors already do this work in their courses, but we agree that it is a good idea to encourage everyone to provide more breadth and context.

The Grad Director is responsible for reviewing graduate course outlines, so they can provide feedback to individual instructors along these lines. We also believe that this would be a worthy topic to

explore at a department retreat; we plan to hold a retreat focusing on our PhD program in the next 18 months.

Dean's Response:

Sounds fine.

Recommendation 4e: Schedule program events, including the Work-in-Progress Colloquium, on days and during times that will allow greater student participation. Where possible, provide significant advance notice of all events. When considering modality for the Colloquium, emphasize options that will promote community-building.

Department's Response and Actions to be Taken: We agree that this is an excellent idea. This year, the graduate colloquiums are scheduled on the same day and time as the proseminars, and the dates were publicized at the very start of the academic year. Community building strategies include meeting in person and including a social meal after the presentations. We acknowledge that it remains challenging to attract everyone to campus, particularly students beyond second year, given the lengthy commute, caregiving responsibilities, and health issues that define the reality of many of our students, and we welcome suggestions from the Dean's office on how to encourage greater participation across cohorts.

Dean's Response:

There will never be 100% attendance and prioritizing in-person attendance for most events is key to maintaining a sense of community belonging. Announcing dates well in advance is also a best practice. Also consider how many events are scheduled, what the expectation is for student attendance, and how that expectation is conveyed.

Recommendation 4f: Consider adding syllabus design and more activities explicitly tied to research creation to the Qualifying Dossier list.

Department's Response and Actions to be Taken: Our qualifying dossier already includes: "a syllabus and a teaching philosophy statement"; "presentation of... [an] artist talk"; "submission of... an artist piece for... juried exhibition"; and a published exhibition review.

We do agree that it is a good idea to review and update the Qualifying Dossier, including by adding an introductory statement emphasizing the importance of research creation and practice-based work and ensuring that information in the Calendar is in line with that printed in our department's graduate handbook.

Dean's Response:

No concerns.

Teaching and Assessment

Recommendation 5a: Consider strategies to streamline and provide additional direction for the comprehensive examination milestone, including developing clear guidelines for assessment.
Department's Response and Actions to be Taken: Thank you for this recommendation. We have worked incrementally on improving clarity around our comprehensive exams, but agree that they are due for another revision, particularly around questions of guidance and assessment. Over the next 18 months, the PhD committee will work on revising the comprehensive exams, in consultation with the CSMA Faculty Caucus.
Dean's Response: It would be best to prioritize time to completion in these discussions. Are all elements of the comprehensive exam necessary? Can any of it be replaced by activities tied to the dissertation (proposal, literature review etc.), if that's not already the case?

Recommendation 5b: Conduct a sector survey of programs that provide a comparable research-creation or project-based thesis option to identify accompanying document length norms and consider how these norms can inform revision of document minima and maxima.
Department's Response and Actions to be Taken: We agree that revisiting the accompanying document for research-creation and project-based theses is an excellent idea, and that a sector survey will provide critical information for this revision. We will seek funding from the MacPherson Student partners program to support this research, which the PhD committee can then use to inform revisions to the guidelines.
Dean's Response: Fine.

Resources to Meet Program Requirements

Recommendation 6a: Recognize the necessity and value of investments in the program's human resources, including the approval of future hires in areas identified as strategic priorities as financial conditions permit.
Department's Response and Actions to be Taken: We agree that this recognition is critical for the ongoing sustainability of our program. Retirements have already affected ECS's involvement, and a

series of medical leaves among staff and faculty in late 2025 demonstrated the need for a healthy faculty and staff complement.

We appreciate the funding we received to hire a 12-month CLA this year (2026), but this position is focused on the undergraduate communication studies program. We are happy to work with the Dean's office in identifying strategic faculty hiring priorities for CNMCS.

Dean's Response:

There is nothing that prohibits a CLA from contributing to a doctoral program. I also recognize the department would appreciate additional hires.

Recommendation 6b: Provide program-dedicated spaces for practice-based research and adequate studio spaces, as well as longer-term commitments to space allocation for program activities.

Department's Response and Actions to be Taken: We agree this is critical for sustaining the success of CNMCS, particularly for research creation work in the program. Faculty members' labs, including Pulse and the NIL, already provide crucial resources of space, equipment, and community to CNMCS students, and AFAC have supported students in accessing and using the Black Box theatre.

However, while we appreciate efforts to arrive at ad hoc solutions, accessing appropriate, dedicated studio spaces for students remains a challenge for the program.

Dean's Response:

The dean's office will continue to do our best to support space needs across the Faculty, but there is not a lot of unused space to be had – and it comes at a financial cost that is difficult to bear.

Recommendation 6c: Develop CNMCS-dedicated resources for student professionalization and create a common digital platform for exchange of program information.

Department's Response and Actions to be Taken: We agree that this is important. Individual grad chairs have taken steps to assemble resources for students, we have offered professionalization workshops in proseminar on our own and in collaboration with ECS, many supervisors and committee members provide one-on-one mentorship to current students and alumni, and the Faculty of Humanities has worked on initiatives as well.

We are committed to addressing this matter over the next 18 months, in consultation with program students. One strategy we are exploring is to establish the role of placement officer, who can provide more direct support for students, especially those aiming to enter the academic job market. We also welcome Faculty- and University-wide supports for professionalization.

Dean's Response:

"Professionalization" in the academic sense would be more effectively supported with the faculty-wide supports gradually being expanded by ADGS, rather than specific program-internal professionalization. For career supports, students should be urged to take advantage of the [grad-student-specific counselling](#) offered by the Student Success Center.

Program Enhancement

Recommendation 8a: Review the doctoral student funding model with particular attention to its relationship to time-to-completion and norms in the Ontario system.

Department's Response and Actions to be Taken: We agree that this is a priority. We are happy to work with the Dean's office and SGS in identifying and carrying out strategies to support students beyond year 4, as well as to supporting students in timely program completion.

Dean's Response:

SGS's Subcommittee on Graduate Financial Support will soon be publishing a dashboard that reports data on funding packages across McMaster graduate programs. This will allow program students and faculty to assess the CNMCS funding package relative to McMaster norms. The Faculty of Humanities has developed a 5th-year internship program to provide paid university employment opportunities for students who need a 5th year to finish the PhD. At the same time, given that there is no prospect of the province funding PhD students beyond 12 terms, the program should endeavour to support students in completing program requirements in that window. The review of program curriculum and comprehensive exam milestones should prioritize this goal in line with the program's commitment to accessibility and student wellbeing.

Recommendation 8b: Provide appropriate and stable program-dedicated physical and technological resources to adequately support both traditional and research creation scholarship (see also Recommendation 6.b.).

Department's Response and Actions to be Taken: We agree that this is important. We are happy to work with the Dean's office on addressing this recommendation. (Please see our response to Recommendation 6.b.)

Dean's Response:

See my response to 6b.

Recommendation 8c: Attend to the changing reality of CNMCS in light of ECS withdrawal from the

program, including facilitating continued collegial discussion of its impact on human resources, curriculum, and governance.

Department's Response and Actions to be Taken: Please see our response to Recommendation 2.d.

Dean's Response:

And my response 2d.

System of Governance

Recommendation 9a: Review how interdisciplinary programs are established, resourced, and change over time in a manner that is collegial and open.

Department's Response and Actions to be Taken: We agree that this is a valuable conversation to have. Given that interdisciplinary programs are often overseen by the deans' office and/or the provost's office, we are happy to do this work in consultation with the Faculty of Humanities Dean's Office. We are particularly open to exploring ongoing and new relationships with ECS, SOTA, and GSJ.

Dean's Response:

2d response.

Recommendation 9b: Develop a governance model that better reflects CSMA's primary role in CNMCS administration and resourcing.

Department's Response and Actions to be Taken: We have already been adapting our governance model to reflect these realities. For example, the CSMA bylaws already reflect the fact that there are no longer CSMA and ECS co-chairs for CNMCS; we introduced a Deputy Grad Director in 2024. We are happy to reflect further on the CNMCS governance model as part of our broader discussions about the relationship of ECS with the program.

Dean's Response:

Agreed. This work is underway.

Recommendation 9c: Continue to work with the Dean of Humanities and the Arts Facilities Advisory Committee to address the physical space needs of the program.

Department's Response and Actions to be Taken: See our response to Recommendation 6.b. We are happy to continue to work with the Dean and AFAC to address our program's space issues, especially regarding studio space for students with artistic and research creation practices.

Dean's Response:

Already addressed.

Implementation Plan

In the chart below, please outline the recommendations made by reviewers, briefly outline the actions you plan to take, who will be responsible for leading the action, and a timeline for completion.

Recommendation	Action(s) to be Taken	Responsibility for Leading Action (specify the role(s) that will be responsible for each action item e.g. Program Chair.)	Timeline for Completing Action (indicate specific timelines (e.g. not 'ongoing') for action)
Recommendation 2a: Continue to emphasize the importance of CNMCS's interdisciplinarity and creative modes of knowledge production and dissemination through research creation to the university's mission	- Update graduate student profiles on program website - Profile student and faculty work on social media and in university stories	Department chair in communication with Humanities Manager of Communication and dean	April to December 2026
Recommendation 2b: We encourage the university administration to support the success and long-term viability of CNMCS through actively supporting and elevating it as an exemplar	Highlight CNCMS work in faculty internal and external communications	Faculty of Humanities Dean, Associate Dean of Graduate Studies, and Manager of Communication	March 2026 to June 2027
Recommendation 2c: Maintain the program's supportive environment to foster student	Continue with colloquium series	Grad director, department chair, graduate student	March 2026 to June 2027

well-being, including the work of community building across student cohorts.	Support student mentoring and representation in the department	representatives, department manager	
Recommendation 2d: Conduct a realistic and forward-looking assessment of the CNMCS program's identity, curricular structure, and future hiring needs in light of ECS' incremental disengagement from the program.	Conduct an audit of courses and associate faculty members; have a retreat to discuss program; consult with ECS colleagues about joint relationship; explore synergies with other Faculty of Humanities faculty	Grad direct, department chair, and PhD committee	May 2026 to May 2027
Recommendation 3a: Consider expanding consultation for the admissions process in order to assess applications	Conduct an environmental scan of admissions practices and pilot a new admissions procedure in January 2027	Grad director, grad admin assistant, and PhD committee	March 2026 to June 2027
Recommendation 4a: Update calendar language to reflect recent changes to theory/methodology requirements.	The calendar language has been updated, so no further action is needed here.	Department Chair	completed
Recommendation 4b: Investigate the possibility of offering a media production course annually.	- Two media production courses are already offered annually - We will try to better communicate this fact	Grad director, grad admin assistant	Completed; March to August 2026

Recommendation 4c: Provide applicants and incoming students with a list of upcoming courses	We will provide a list of courses to students	Grad director, grad admin assistant	March to August 2026
Recommendation 4d: Encourage instructors to provide more breadth, contextualization, and background on the fields their courses	- The grad director can provide feedback when they review course outlines - We will discuss this at our next retreat	Grad director, PhD committee	May 2026 to May 2027
Recommendation 4e: Schedule program events, including the Work-in-Progress Colloquium, on days and during times that will allow greater student participation.	- Scheduling has been addressed this year - We welcome suggestions from the dean's office as well	Grad director, dean, associate dean graduate studies	September 2025 to September 2026
Recommendation 4f: Consider adding syllabus design and more activities explicitly tied to research creation to the Qualifying Dossier list	- Our dossier already includes syllabus design and artistic creation options - We will update our introductory language for the dossier	Grad director, PhD committee	Completed; March to December 2026
Recommendation 5a: Consider strategies to streamline and provide additional direction for the comprehensive examination milestone	The PhD committee will update the strategies in consultation with the faculty caucus	Grad director, PhD committee	May 2026 to May 2027

Recommendation 5b: Conduct a sector survey of programs that provide a comparable research-creation or project-based thesis option	We will hire a student partner to conduct this survey and use that information to update the guidelines	Department chair, ADM, Grad director, PhD committee	September 2026 to April 2027
Recommendation 6a: Recognize the necessity and value of investments in the program's human resources	Identify hiring priorities	Department chair in consultation with faculty caucus and dean	February 2026 to May 2027
Recommendation 6b: Provide program-dedicated spaces for practice-based research and adequate studio spaces	Work with Arts Operations, Resources and Production and Dean to address	Department chair and grad director in consultation with dean, Director of Finance, and AOPS Director	March 2026 to May 2027
Recommendation 6c: Develop CNMCS-dedicated resources for student professionalization and create a common digital platform for exchange of program information.	- Create placement officer role - Build online portal - Work with faculty of humanities on developing professionalization opportunities	Grad director, PhD committee, Associate Dean Grad Studies, Department chair	May 2026 to May 2027
Recommendation 8a: Review the doctoral student funding model with particular attention to its relationship to time-to-completion and norms in the Ontario system	Work with dean's office and SGS to develop support strategies	Grad director, ADGSR, Dean of Graduate studies	May 2026 to May 2027

Recommendation 8b: Provide appropriate and stable program-dedicated physical and technological resources	See recommendation 6 b	See recommendation 6 b	See recommendation 6 b
Recommendation 8c: Attend to the changing reality of CNMCS in light of ECS withdrawal from the program, including facilitating continued collegial discussion of its impact on human resources, curriculum, and governance	See recommendation 2 d	See recommendation 2 d	See recommendation 2 d
Recommendation 9a: Review how interdisciplinary programs are established, resourced, and change over time in a manner that is collegial and open	• Work with the Humanities Dean's office	Department chair, Dean	May 2026 to May 2027
Recommendation 9b: Develop a governance model that better reflects CSMA's primary role in CNMCS administration and resourcing	• We have addressed this by developing the role of Deputy Grad Director • We will continue to iterate our governance model	Department chair, Grad director	May 2026 to May 2027
Recommendation 9c: Continue to work with the Dean of Humanities and the Arts Facilities Advisory Committee to address	See recommendation 6 b	See recommendation 6 b	See recommendation 6 b

the physical space needs of the program			
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Quality Assurance Committee Recommendation

McMaster's Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) reviewed the above documentation at the April 16, 2026, meeting. The committee recommends that the **Communication, New Media, and Cultural Studies PhD** program should follow the regular course of action with an 18-month progress report and subsequent full external cyclical review to be scheduled in seven years, and to be conducted no later than eight years after the start of the last review.