**New Program Proposal**

**University of Toronto Scarborough (UTSC) / Centennial College**

**Specialist (Joint) program in Music Industry and Technology External Appraisal, 22 March 2023 / Site Visit, 8–9 March 2023:**

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**Introduction**

In our review, we were provided with various documents including the University of Toronto Scarborough strategic plan and the program proposal for the Specialist (Joint) program. During our visit we toured the facilities and met faculty and students at both UTSC and Centennial College. At every step we found enthusiastic faculty and administrators who are committed to student success and the mission of UTSC and Centennial College. We were particularly impressed with the commitment to underrepresented persons, first generation students, and students historically denied a college education. We found that development of the Specialist (Joint) program has been careful and deliberate – taking into account existing resources and how they can be leveraged for the new degree. While we have a few comments, criticisms, and suggestions detailed in the document below, we are confident that UTSC and Centennial have created a viable program that has strong potential for future growth. We fully support the creation of the Specialist (Joint) Program in Music Industry and Technology.

**Report Summary**

**Program Evaluation Criteria**

# **Objectives**

## Consistency of the program with the institution’s mission and unit’s academic plans.

This program seems to be consistent with both UTSC and Centennial College missions. Both UTSC and Centennial focus on *experiential learning* and on *building community*. Both institutions have a history of inclusivity, and this new program builds on that history.

*Decolonization* is something that many academic disciplines in Canada and beyond are struggling with currently, with particular challenges for Music Conservatories and Departments of Music, where the object of study is primarily Western European Art Music. It is not difficult to see why this would be a challenging prospect; it collides with the very definition and essence of the Conservatory. Fortunately, both UTSC and Centennial are in a strong position to truly innovate in this area, and actively find new paths toward inclusivity and diversity in their programming and in their student body.

## Clarity and appropriateness of the program’s requirements and associated learning

**outcomes in addressing the academic division’s undergraduate Degree Level Expectations.**

The program requirements and learning outcomes are appropriate. We feel that the program requirements match the learning outcomes; we had some concern about the potential overlap between UTSC’s courses and Centennial’s courses, but we decided that some repetition of material can be considered strong pedagogical practice as long as the approach is somewhat different.

## Appropriateness of the degree or diploma nomenclature.

This degree confers an Honours Bachelor of Arts (University of Toronto) and an

Ontario College Certificate in Music Business and Technology (Centennial College). We feel this is appropriate and practical for students who finish the program, and the structure of the program is similar to existing successful UTSC/Centennial College Joint programs. The idea of having two tracks: **Audio Engineering** and **Music Business** makes sense to us.

# **Admission Requirements**

## Appropriateness of the program’s admission requirements for the learning outcomes

**established for completion of the program.**

Students enrolling directly from high school will be evaluated on their academic performance and a supplementary application that includes three primary criteria:

* 1. Background and experiences in music.
	2. Goals and ambitions in music.
	3. Why choose this degree program.

In addition, students have the opportunity to submit representative musical work via the common streaming websites such as Soundcloud and YouTube. The admissions workload is anticipated to be 20 – 25 applicants per year, each application requiring approximately 10 minutes of work.

We find these application criteria to be appropriate and note that they allow a great deal of flexibility on the part of the application committee when reviewing each applicant, but they are quite general in nature and could be refined and targeted to better assess an applicant’s background and preparation. We have the following suggestions:

1. Facility with technology will be required for success in this degree; we suggest adding a question or questions to the supplementary application about a student’s experience using technology for music and audio production, and experience with technology outside of music/audio such as video, graphics, coding, etc.
2. We also suggest expanding the supplementary application to include a portfolio of creative work. While the majority of applicants will submit music recordings or videos, many will be multidisciplinary artists who have created in a variety of media such as visual art or filmmaking. The opportunity to view all their creative work will provide a more complete picture of the applicant allowing the admissions committee to better assess an applicant’s qualifications.

The provided documentation states that the Department of Arts, Culture and Media Program Manager and the Director of the Music Industry and Technology degree program will adjudicate the admissions process. This is based on the expected number of applications. We feel that both the number of applications and the time required to review each application is grossly underestimated. It is probable that the number of applications during the first few years of the program will be relatively small but we anticipate that the number will grow. Additionally, careful consideration of each application will require a considerable time commitment, especially considering UTSC’s commitment to provide opportunities to students who have historically been denied a university education. These students may not conform to traditional metrics which in turn may require more effort to properly assess the student’s application and qualifications. We have the following suggestions:

1. Institute a two-stage application review process. A review of basic academic credentials to ensure that the applicant meets UTSC’s criteria, followed by a review of the supplementary application by a committee of ACM faculty.
2. Since students will be spending three terms studying at Centennial College, we suggest that Centennial College faculty also be a part of the application review.

## Appropriateness of any alternative requirements, if any, for admission into the program such as minimum grade point average or additional languages or portfolios, along with how the program recognizes prior work or learning experience.

The degree program is intended for direct entry from high school and provides a path for students to graduate within four years. In addition, there is a second-chance pathway for current UTSC student who may not have known of the degree or want to change majors. However, students with more than 10 credits will be ineligible for this second-chance pathway. We find these policies to be appropriate and ensure that students are able to graduate within the standard four-year time frame.

# **Structure**

## Appropriateness of the program's structure and regulations to meet specified program learning outcomes and Degree Level Expectations.

We find the program’s structure to be an effective merger of the two schools’ existing curricula. As mentioned above, we have some concern about overlap between courses at UTSC vs Centennial. Most likely this can be addressed “on the fly” as the program matures, and course content at both institutions could conceivably be modified somewhat, with the caveat that since there are no new courses proposed, any changes in the course curricula at either institution would have to be done in such a way as to avoid any disturbance for students who are NOT in this program.

## The extent to which the program structure and delivery methods reflect universal design principles and/or how the potential need to provide mental or physical health accommodations has been considered in the development of this program.

There is considerable support for students at both institutions to make sure no one is left behind. We were particularly impressed with the Centennial librarians’ intense commitment to support each and every student in numerous modalities. We found their support to be a stand-out from our experience at other institutions.

# **Program Content**

## Ways in which the curriculum addresses the current state of the discipline or area of study.

In general, we believe that the curriculum will be effective and inspiring. While it is impressive to launch this program without the need for any new courses (and the associated cost of doing so either monetarily or in terms of teaching load), we identified a few areas where the curriculum is lacking. In particular, we feel that an introductory course taught in the first or second semester that ties everything together, covering the physics of sound, psychoacoustics and the basics of electricity – subjects that never become outdated

– will enhance the curriculum. For example, at the University of Victoria, we have a class called "Music Science and Computers" that is the introduction to our combined degree in music and computer science. Later, in the hand-on classes at Centennial, they would refer to this basic theoretical knowledge.

Second, we noted that in the three semesters at Centennial College, the course sequence is somewhat compressed. Specifically, students in the Joint (Specialist) program take introductory and advanced audio engineering/music business courses simultaneously.

Whereas Centennial College students take the courses in subsequent semesters: (MBTB41H3 Intro to Audio Engineering, MBTC62H3 Advanced Sound Mixing and Editing, MBTC63H3 Advanced Sound Production and Recording; MBTB50H3 Music Business Fundamentals, MBTC70H3 Copyright, Royalties, Licensing, and Publishing, MBTC72H3 Advanced Music Business.) This was acknowledged in our discussion with the Centennial College faculty and they considered it a reasonable compromise to enable students in the Specialist (Joint) program to complete coursework in the allotted three semesters without modifying the current course sequence. However, we view this as problematic and are not clear how introductory and advanced subject matter can be taught at the same time. We suggest exploring options for teaching this introductory material in existing or new courses at UTSC during the first three semesters, or modifying the course sequence at Centennial College so students in the Specialist (Joint) program have the requisite knowledge to be successful in the advanced courses.

We also noted that while strong in the fundamentals, the Centennial College audio engineering curriculum does not address current developments and emerging technologies in the music industry, most notably immersive audio. While there is some debate whether immersive audio has a place in music production, it has become a standard mode of delivery for visual media projects and is essential knowledge for those working in that field. We certainly understand that it can be challenging to integrate new technologies into existing facilities, however we feel it important that UTSC and Centennial College explore

the possibility of equipping their studios and integrating immersive audio (and other emerging technologies) into the curriculum.

## Identification of any unique curriculum or program innovations or creative components and their appropriateness.

We found the innovations in how to approach music holistically without many traditional requirements (fostering diversity in the student body) was innovative – for example, the use of Logic Pro to teach orchestration without using notation was very intriguing.

We are also aware that although graduates from music conservatories typically have very rigorous training in Western music, it is very common for them to have never improvised at all in their entire career at the conservatory. Improvisation is something that is introduced in the proposed curriculum, and we applaud that.

# **Mode of Delivery**

## Appropriateness of the proposed mode(s) of delivery (distance learning, compressed part- time, online, mixed-mode or non-standard forms of delivery, flexible-time options) to meet the intended program learning outcomes and Degree Level Expectations.

The proposed model includes traditional liberal arts in-person classroom instruction with the associated traditional assignments such as writing, exercises, examination, etc. Music and technology courses include lab instruction which give students the opportunity to complete hands-on creative projects using music technology equipment. During the three- semesters at Centennial College, students will work in the recording studio independently and in small groups completing music recording and production projects. They have the opportunity to use professional-quality equipment that is representative of the industry. In their last semester at Centennial, students complete a six-week internship affording them the opportunity to work in a professional environment. In their final year at UTSC, students complete a self-directed senior project.

We feel that this structure is appropriate for this course of study. The combination of liberal arts, music, and technology provides students with an ideal blend of traditional classroom and experiential, hands-on learning. They will learn how to be lifelong learners while gaining the practical knowledge necessary to work professionally in the music industry. We would also like to acknowledge the excellent support and outreach provided by both the UTSC and

Centennial College libraries and library staff, a critically important resource available to students.

# **Assessment of Teaching and Learning**

## Appropriateness of the proposed methods for the assessment of student achievement of the intended program learning outcomes and Degree Level Expectations.

We believe that the proposed methods of assessment are appropriate for this program. Assessment at Centennial College is very clearly project-based (not test-based); this makes sense and is the best way to assess creative work.

## Completeness of plans for documenting and demonstrating the level of performance of students, consistent with the academic division’s statement of its Degree Level Expectations.

Experiential learning is at the center of this program, and it also leads to creative materials / dossier that the graduates can use to demonstrate their mastery in particular areas of audio technology etc. when searching for employment.

# **Resources**

## Adequacy of the administrative unit’s planned utilization of existing human, physical and financial resources, and any institutional commitment to supplement those resources to support the program. Adequacy of resources to sustain the quality of scholarship and research activities of undergraduate students, including library support, information technology support and laboratory access.

UTSC has a small, well-equipped sound lab, but it is not a purpose-built audio production facility. It lacks the proper sound isolation and acoustic design to function as a critical listening and mixing space and can only accommodate a few persons at a time. Other than a small isolation booth, there is no area for recording musicians and ensembles. We recognize that the primary instruction in audio recording and production will take place at Centennial College which has an excellent recording studio, however it is important to note that students spend their final year back on the UTSC campus and will not have access to an adequate recording facility for any of their academic work, including their senior project.

We have been told that a new building (Scarborough Centre for Literatures, Arts, Media and Performance) is in the planning stages that will include facilities for the Department of Arts, Culture and Media. We strongly recommend that a state-of-the-art recording studio be included in this building with sufficient space to accommodate a class of 20 students and record an ensemble of 12 to 15 musicians.

Centennial College has an excellent, well-equipped recording studio with industry standard equipment. We did note that the facility is quite small—the control room can comfortably accommodate four to five persons at the most, and since the studio space doubles as a classroom, a section of it is occupied by stacked chairs and other classroom equipment. In any case, we feel that this facility is adequate for instruction and will provide the hands-on experience necessary to learn the craft of audio recording and production. Centennial College also has other facilities including a television production studio that provide opportunities to enhance student learning. As with UTSC, we were told that Centennial is planning a new building several years from now. Again, we strongly recommend that the building include a large recording studio with space to accommodate a class of 20 or more and a sizable ensemble of musicians. It should be noted that learning the craft of audio engineering and production requires experience, hours of hands-on work with the equipment working with a variety of musicians, ensembles, musical styles, and production fields. A single studio limits the number of students the degree can service, and also puts limits on student learning. Of course, through careful management it's possible to provide a meaningful education with a single recording studio, but an additional facility would allow for expansion of student learning opportunities, including the aforementioned emerging technologies and importantly, expansion of enrollment.

Outside of the audio production facilities, we were impressed with the facilities of UTSC and Centennial. The design and integration of technology into the conference and teaching spaces we saw was excellent. The library facilities are outstanding and are clearly geared towards student support. They include student meeting and study spaces, maker spaces and plenty of computer workstations. We did not ask specifically about technical support and maintenance personnel, but the technology we saw appeared to be current and in working order so we can assume that technical support is sufficient. We also asked about IT support and were pleased to learn that students have access to OneDrive cloud storage at UTSC, and server storage at Centennial; this is a critically important service for students working in media production who often work on sizable projects and need server storage for ongoing projects and assignment submission.

## Participation of a sufficient number and quality of faculty who are competent to teach and/or supervise in the program. Evidence of and planning for adequate numbers and

**quality of faculty and staff to achieve the goals of the program. Planning and commitment to provide the necessary resources in step with the implementation of the program.**

**Planned/anticipated class sizes. The role of adjunct and part-time faculty.**

The faculty at the Department of Arts, Culture and Media at UTSC and School of Communications, Media, Art and Design at Centennial are well-qualified to support students in this new degree program. Across the two institutions there is a unique combination of academic research, teaching, and real-world experience. We did have some questions about student numbers and class size and it was unclear to us how Centennial College would accommodate the additional students from UTSC while continuing to serve their students, but we trust that this has been addressed as the Specialist (Joint) degree has been developed. In the program content section above, we noted some subjects that were lacking in the curriculum and suggested new course development which will most likely require additional faculty.

We are aware that Toronto has a wide range of experts who would be willing to be guest lecturers in various fields, and whose presence can certainly enrich the experience for the students.

# **Quality and Other Indicators**

## Quality of the faculty (e.g., qualifications, research, innovation and scholarly record; appropriateness of collective faculty expertise to contribute substantively to the proposed program). Program structure and faculty research that will ensure the intellectual quality of the student experience.

This degree will be supported by an excellent group of scholars who are active researchers and practitioners with a variety of experience and expertise. The combination of research and creative activity of the UTSC faculty and practical hands-on experience of the Centennial College faculty create a particularly strong combination of academic and practical expertise that will contribute to the strength of this degree. Of note is the variety of musical interests represented in the faculty’s research and creative activity. This aspect is critically important in the field of modern popular music which draws influences from many cultures and musical genres. We anticipate that incoming students will reflect a similar diversity of ideas and are confident that they will find mentors among the faculty.

## The extent to which the program has integrated any elements that enhance the diversity of its curriculum, students, or teaching staff.

UTSC and Centennial College are located Toronto which is one of the most culturally diverse regions of Canada, and many of their students are drawn from the community. It should also be noted that modern popular music has its roots in the music of oppressed and underrepresented peoples, so a degree program based on this music is, by definition, diverse. In addition, the inclusion of non-Western instruments and electronic music into various ensembles enhances and encourages diversity.