

**External Review Panel Final Report**

**on the**

**McGill University  
School of Information Studies (SIS)  
Master of Information Studies (MIS) Degree Program**

**Conducted on behalf of the American Library Association  
Committee on Accreditation**

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## INTRODUCTION

The Master of Information Studies (MIS) degree program at McGill University is offered by the School of Information Studies (SIS) in the Faculty of Arts. The program has been accredited by the American Library Association since 1927. An External Review Panel (ERP) of the American Library Association's Committee on Accreditation conducted a site visit from September 25-27, 2016, at this program for the purpose of evaluating it for continued accreditation. In addition to the School of Information Studies *Self-Study* (August 15, 2016), this final report is based on a wide variety of evidence as detailed in Appendix I.

From May to September, 2016, the ERP Chair scheduled a number of telephone conversations with the program Director, Dr. Kimiz Dalkir, to provide specific feedback and request additional information following receipt of the draft Self-Study document (May 30, 2016), to develop and finalize the schedule and related arrangements for the ERP site visit, to secure telephone interviews with the Provost and Dean of Arts (both of whom were unable to be on-site during the ERP visit), to secure guest login for the McGill Learning Management System, and to finalize opportunities to meet with students, faculty, staff, alumni, employers, and other stakeholders associated with the program, as required. Appendix II contains the list of groups and individuals interviewed prior or to and during the site visit.

As the McGill University Faculty of Arts and the School of Information Studies are located within the downtown campus, all scheduled meetings, class visits, and facilities toured by the ERP were contained within that campus. The ERP toured the School of Information Studies building (faculty, staff, PhD student, and Student Council offices, meeting rooms, and common areas), the McLennan Library, and classroom and computer/IT facilities around campus. Panel members observed three face-to-face classes on-site; there are no online courses delivered by the program. McGill University supports face-to-face classroom course delivery; the program is in alignment with cross-campus teaching practice. The exit interview was conducted with Dr. Angela Campbell, Associate Provost (Policy, Procedures, and

Equity) and Provost's designate; Dr. Jim Engle-Warnick, Associate Dean, Research, Faculty of Arts and Dean's designate; and SIS Director, Dr. Kimiz Dalkir. All ERP members were in attendance.

The ERP appreciated the support and hospitality extended during the visit. The Chair particularly thanks Dr. Kimiz Dalkir, Director of the School of Information Studies, Kathryn Hubbard (SIS program administrative staff), and Liz Nash (MISSA President) for their assistance throughout the process, and commends all of the faculty and staff for their very timely response to requests for additional information and for being readily available throughout the site visit. The panel appreciates the engagement with on-site activities, document review, and assistance with interpreting aspects of the accreditation standards (2015) within the provincial educational and legal contexts of Québec (e.g., human rights and privacy laws; cultural property laws; and language laws) that Canadian Federation of Library Associations (CFLA) appointee, Pat Riva, provided readily in her role as Observer.

#### **STANDARD I: SYSTEMATIC PLANNING**

McGill University's master's degree program pursues its mission and program goals through a systematic planning process (I.1). The *Self-Study* describes various stages of a planning process for the Master of Information Studies (MIS; formerly MLIS) from 2010 to 2016 (SS pp. 19-23). The outcome of this process included substantial changes to the program that resulted in two degrees: *MIS Non-Thesis* (course-based) and *MIS Non-Thesis Project* (research-based) that were approved by the university in 2013 and implemented in 2014. The first cohort of students to complete the MIS Non-Thesis graduated in 2016. The planning process since the introduction of the two degrees has been closely interlinked with the preparations for the intensive accreditation review scheduled for the fall of 2016.

As evidenced by the *Self-Study* and particularly discussion with the Director of the program and faculty during the site visit, the program engages in continuous review and revision of the vision, mission, goals, objectives, and student learning outcomes (I.1.1). SIS applies its overall program vision and mission to the MIS degree (SS, p. 27). The vision statement notes that "The School of Information

Studies focuses upon the knowledge and skills necessary for identification, acquisition, organization, retrieval, and dissemination of information to meet people's needs in diversified information, knowledge, and learning environments.” Further, to achieve this vision “the School aims to advance the dynamic field of library and information studies by:

- Attracting excellent students and inspiring them to become future leaders in the information professions
- Developing innovative, service-oriented information professionals for diverse environments
- Producing research and publications that advance the theory and practice of the discipline
- Promoting excellence in professional practice
- Playing a leadership role in the information society in Quebec, Canada, and abroad” (SS, pp. 26-27; SIS website – <http://www.mcgill.ca/sis/about/mission-history>).

The Mission statement notes that “the mission of the School of Information Studies is the advancement of learning through education, scholarship, and service in library and information studies” (SS, p. 27; SIS website - <http://www.mcgill.ca/sis/about/mission-history>). While the program has a lengthy history, with a vision and mission to educate information professionals, during the recent thorough review of its Master’s program particular attention was given to the articulation of its vision and mission statements.

The four goals, nine program objectives, and ten learning outcomes for the Master’s program were updated as a result of the recent review process (2011-2014; SS, pp. 19-20) for designing and implementing the MIST degree and were reviewed (2016) again during the preparation of the *Self-Study* report (SS, pp. 27-29; SIS website - <http://www.mcgill.ca/sis/programs/mist>; interviews with the Director and faculty on-site). The goals, objectives, and learning outcomes are often included in the discussion of the Curriculum Committee and Departmental Meeting (Minutes reviewed on-site). The program will once again review the goals, objectives, and learning outcomes during the planned Forum to be conducted in 2016-2017 (Interview Dalkir)

As evidenced by examination of committee documentation (Departmental Meeting and Curriculum Committee) and discussion with the Director and faculty on-site, the program systematically assesses its goals, objectives, and student learning outcomes (I.1.2). The analysis and assessment are conducted primarily within the Curriculum Committee and the Departmental Meeting (SS, pp. 40-41, and committee minutes). Further discussion about the assessment activities will be found in other sections of this report, particularly the sections dealing with curriculum, faculty, and students.

Assessment data has been employed to improve the program (I.1.3). For example, assessment data (course teaching evaluations; feedback from alumni and employers; student submissions to Curriculum Committee, etc.) were used in designing and implementing the substantially revised MIST launched in 2014. The first cohort of students in the MIST program graduated in the spring of 2016. The program has been substantially revised, and assessment processes are now being initiated to evaluate individual courses, the suite of core required courses, and the program in total (interviews Dalkir; Guastavino; faculty on-site).

The School and the program are in a transition. The MIST is, itself, significantly revised the Director, Dr. Kimiz Dalkir, was confirmed June 1, 2016, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts (Dr. Antonia Maioni) was also appointed in 2016, the Dean of Graduate and Post-Doctoral Studies (Dr. Josephine Nalbantoglu) and the Provost (Dr. Christopher Manfredi) were also appointed in 2015. The School of Information Studies is at an opportune juncture to continue to position its MIST program visibly within the university as the new senior university administrators implement strategic and systematic planning processes.

The programs goals (SS, p. 27) and the goals and objectives for the MIST degrees (SS, p. 28; and program website (<http://www.mcgill.ca/sis/programs/mist>) align closely (I.1.4) with the five priority areas of Principal Suzanne Fortier (<http://www.mcgill.ca/principal/five-priorities>).

As the program proceeds with a planned Forum in the Fall of 2016, the Principal's priority areas, provide a strong context in which to assess the implementation of the substantially revised MIST degrees and to plan their continuation.

All students in the MIST program complete a suite of 16 courses (48 credit hours) of which 5 are required of all students (core to the field), and 11 are electives. Program goals, objectives, and learning outcomes have been mapped to Standards 1.2.1 through 1.2.8 (SS Table 6, pp. 45-46; pp. 47-48; also SLO to course mappings, A12) and confirmed through examination of course syllabi made available on-site, and online via myCourses, and through discussions with faculty and students on-site. The curriculum as a whole provides students with a variety of options that will ensure they will achieve the learning outcomes at the conclusion of their plan of studies for the degree (I.2).

The program goals and objectives (SS, p. 27 and the program website <http://www.mcgill.ca/sis/programs/mist>) provide obvious evidence that teaching and service are important aspects of the information studies field (I.3). Goal # 6, for example, states that the MIST program aims to "educate service-oriented information professionals." In addition, Objectives # 8 & 9 note that the program will offer courses and other opportunities for MIST students to understand the importance of facilitating "the interaction between users, and information and knowledge resources," as well as "understand the nature of professional ethics and the role of professional associations." (SS, pp. 47-48.)

The *Self-Study* (pp. 48-50) outlines the methods by which the constituents of the program were involved in the revision of the MIST and in ongoing evaluation of the program (I.1.4; I.4.1). Students and faculty are regularly involved in the evaluation processes, e.g., course teaching evaluations, Curriculum Committee deliberations, ad hoc meetings regarding the curriculum mapping, and Departmental Meetings. Input from employers is more ad hoc, obtained primarily via the reports of employers of

student practicum placements, and through the Forum held at the beginning of the planning process that led to the substantially revised MIST program (I.4.1).

The program conducts an evaluation of its achievement of mission, goals, and objective primarily through its Curriculum Committee, and Departmental Meeting (I.1.2; I.5) (interviews with the Director and faculty; consultation of minutes on site). Now that the first cohort of students in the substantially revised MIST have graduated (Spring 2016), the program plans to hold a Forum involving all constituents in the Fall of 2016 (interview Dalkir) that will provide an opportunity to review how well the plans for the degree have been met so far. It is still “early days” for obtaining evidence to evaluate the program.

The *Self-Study* (pp. 52-54) describes the steps taken to evaluate the MLIS degree and plan for the substantially revised MIST introduced in 2014 (I.6). These steps confirm that the evaluation data was carefully considered in planning the MIST (interviews Dalkir; faculty on site). The *Self-Study* (p. 56) outlines additional methods by which the program expects to incorporate feedback from various stakeholders, e.g., focus groups; adding alumni, employer, and liaison librarian as members of the Curriculum Committee; implementing more frequent curricular reviews, establishing an Advisory Board, etc. (I.4.1). When implemented, these additional feedback mechanisms will strengthen the program’s use of evaluation data in its systematic planning activities (I.6).

In its review of the evidence provided in the *Self-Study* and related documentation as well as on-site discussion with the program’s Director, faculty, students, senior university administrators, and employers, the ERP particularly noted the following:

- The program carefully considered the merits of changing its academic location with the move from the Faculty of Education to the Faculty of Arts. Interviews with faculty, the program Director, the Associate Dean, Research (Faculty of Arts), the Dean of Arts, and the Provost confirmed that the decision to move to the Faculty of Arts has been a positive development. Both the Dean of Arts and the Provost were pleased with the fit of the School of Information Studies to the Faculty of Arts and noted that the School was positioned to contribute to the future plans for the Faculty including collaborative research with the new School of Public Policy (telephone interviews).

- In preparing to launch the substantially revised MIST degrees, SIS thoroughly considered the future of the profession within Quebec and further afield and planned the curriculum of the two degrees accordingly.
- The program's goals and objectives align well with the Principal's strategic priorities for the university (<http://www.mcgill.ca/principal/five-priorities>).
- In a period of considerable budgetary constraint at McGill University recently, the program's strategic planning decisions were effective in obtaining approval for resulted in hiring additional faculty that resulted in a larger faculty complement.

While the program has been successful in recently securing new faculty positions and in launching the substantially revised MIST in 2014, further attention can be given to implementing a more robust and articulated systematic planning process that regularly seeks input from all stakeholders (SS, p. 6). As the *Self-Study* notes, the advice of alumni and employers could be regularly obtained, for example, by providing a seat on the Curriculum Committee for representation from these groups.

## STANDARD II: CURRICULUM

The curriculum provides for the study of theory, principles, practice, and legal and ethical issues and values necessary for the provision of service in libraries, information agencies, and other contexts (II.1.) (SS, pp. 58-111). Evidence also indicates that the curriculum is revised regularly for currency. The program vision and mission are linked to the MIST program including goals and objectives, program and course learning outcomes (SS, pp. 24-28) all of which were reviewed and revised in a comprehensive process between 2010 and 2014, and which systematic review has continued up to the period of the ERP site visit.

The review, which resulted in a substantially revised MIST degree that received Senate approval in the spring of 2014, and subsequent launching of its first cohort in the fall of 2014 (SS, p. 42; Minutes), began in 2010 in a one-day strategic planning *Forum on Curriculum* involving all stakeholders (SS, A8). Evidence collected and reviewed on-site (Departmental meeting minutes; Curriculum Committee minutes; GLIS 601 sample work; interviews with current Curriculum Committee chair, Dr. J. Bartlett, Director K. Dalkir, a Curriculum Committee student representative, and student association (MISSA)

president Nash; other faculty, student and employer interviews) confirmed several major changes to the MIST program emerging from this review including: revised program goals and objectives with 10 corresponding student learning outcomes mapped back to these objectives (SS, pp. 45-47; A12); the elimination of formal specializations and, instead, the articulation of four thematic areas of interest for MIST students (i.e., Libraries, Archives, ICT, and Knowledge Management )(Minutes; website); the introduction of a research degree (MIST Non-Thesis, Project (hereafter as MIST-Project) as an alternative to the course-based option; and the introduction of five mandatory courses (required of all MIST students) including a new capstone course GLIS 602 - Integrating Research and Practice (SS, p. 59).

In addition to the five mandatory courses (SS 59; SIS website) the program offers research-oriented and other elective course to meet the content identified in Standard II.2 (SS 58-110; Course outlines, interviews). Students who select the research degree (MIST Non-Thesis, Project) have four additional required courses specific to the research process and project (SS, p. 59). Self-Study pp. 63-78 maps course outcomes to all parts of Standard II.2.

The ERP examined all course offerings and their enrollments (A32), course schedules since 2014, and sample student program plans (6) to determine that students are consistently able to construct coherent programs of study as required in Standard II.3. For students who begin the program without having already identified their preferred area of specialization, in addition to counsel from their faculty advisors, GLIS 601 offers multiple activities to inform and guide new students on the four thematic areas of interest (Libraries, Archives, ICT and KM) (Interviews; website; detailed course outline; sample plans). Students have ready access to their designated faculty advisors, to the program Director, and are also encouraged to organize their own educational activities (e.g., InfoNexus) supplementing formal courses (SS, p. 175; Interviews). Despite not having been taught for more than 5 years, *GLIS 690 Information Policy* has been retained in the substantially revised curriculum, in part because of its continued relevance to professional values and ethics (II.1, II.2); efforts are being renewed to find an appropriate

instructor and schedule the course for 2017/2018 (Interview Dalkir). Students made frequent mention of usefulness of the electives information session (SS, p. 98; interviews) for their program planning. In addition, the option to take courses outside the SIS to complement individual programs is clearly stated (website); policies and procedures are known, counsel is provided as needed (Interviews). The move to the Faculty of Arts is viewed both by students and faculty as strengthening interdisciplinary opportunities in their programs of study. Course content and sequence are evident in students' study plans prepared as one assignment in the required Foundations course (Samples 2014; 2015).

The revised MIST course-based option provides suggested paths or areas of interest in 4 broad domains: Libraries, Archives, ICT and KM (Website). As per Standard II.4, and where appropriate to courses and subject areas of interest, these curricula take into account the statements of knowledge and competencies from relevant professional organizations, including, the Medical Library Association, Special Library Association, and the Association of Canadian Archivists (SS, p. 100; Class observation; Interviews).

The program employs procedures for continual evaluation of the curriculum (II.5)(On-site Course Evaluation Data Summary). Data and relevant course materials are referred to the Curriculum Committee for discussion and/or recommended actions if appropriate, this year (2016/2017). The topic of copyright was identified by students, and suggested by the course mappings to SLOs completed to-date, for more in-depth treatment in the substantially revised MIST program (SS, pp. 108-109). The program's first response to organize an optional workshop by the Library's Copyright Librarian held outside regularly scheduled courses, was well-received and satisfactorily met student expectations in the short-term (Interviews with students). In parallel, the request was also referred to the Curriculum Committee where all course learning outcomes are reviewed for a more systematic response.

As regards Standards II.5, II.6, and II.7, evidence that curricular evaluation is used for ongoing appraisal and improvement was identified (Curriculum Committee minutes; interviews with faculty and

practicum employers on-site). Input from all constituents for curriculum evaluation is gathered and considered as indicated by minutes of the regularly scheduled Curriculum Committee and Departmental Meeting including faculty, staff and student representatives, and to a limited extent from data supplied through the Graduate Placement and Employment Survey (A11). While the lack of some minutes for selected strategic planning meetings made a determination of specific decisions and actions difficult to assess, on-site interviews with the program Director and faculty involved in program revision provided some evidence of the process. Nonetheless, comprehensive assessment of student achievement tied to student learning outcomes is identified as an area for continuous improvement. For example, the Practicum course (SS, p. 53; Website) provides only an optional student evaluation form; no formal assessment process is yet in place to collect and act on employer feedback. Student achievements, including course-based and extra-curricular learning activities such as conference presentations or publications, are presented in year-end open houses (SS, pp. 102-103) and reported in the SIS program's newsletters (SS, p. A25). Once mapping of course outlines to student learning outcomes has been completed in 2016/2017, a framework for collecting, assessing and incorporating student achievement back into curricular planning can then be developed and implemented.

The ERP particularly noted that, upon completion of the course outline to learning outcomes mapping, the Curriculum Committee will again, systematically, review the entire revised curriculum from the perspective of subjects specified in II.2 (Interviews). Among the courses that have not yet been mapped to SLOs (SS, p. 109; A12) are subject-based reference courses (see II.2.5 and II.2.6). Together with These and other courses are being reviewed by a Curriculum Committee Working Group, within the framework of the program level goals, objectives and SLOs (Interviews; Committee minutes). Several of these courses could and/or may be deleted or re-organized differently to suit the changing landscape of information services particularly in academic and public libraries (onsite interviews students and

faculty). Recommendations are expected in 2016/2017 from the Working Group and the Curriculum Committee to be presented to the Departmental Meeting for approval.

### **STANDARD III: FACULTY**

The composition of the SIS program faculty is described in the *SS* (pp. 111-121); recent changes include approval for the hiring of full-time faculty positions to a current steady state of twelve (target set as per Strategic Plan of 2009). One recent hire returned to the United States; a search was initiated and an appointment subsequently made. Dr. Colleen Cook, the Trenholme Director of Libraries (*SS*, p. 111) holds a cross-appointment at the rank of Full Professor in SIS; while she has expressed an interest in teaching, she has not yet had an opportunity to do so (*SS* 111). The expertise and experience of the fulltime faculty relates to the program goals and they are qualified for graduate supervision and teaching within the parent institution (III.1) (Interview Nalbantoglu; *SS* pp.113-114; Faculty CV Files). In general, the expertise and experience of part-time sessional instructors provide breadth and diversity of subject expertise and professional experience that differs from and complements that of fulltime faculty (*SS* pp. 116-121) (Appendix - Sessional CVs; on-site interviews). As confirmed by the program Director an estimated 40 courses are taught per academic year. Of those, the majority (ca. 30 or 75%) are taught by full-time faculty, on average 10 courses (25%) are taught by sessional instructors, and of those sessional instructors, 1-2 are PhD students with the remainder being professionals from the field (Interview Dalkir; review of course scheduling and Faculty CVs; *SS* pp. 116-121 Table 15). Recent Faculty-level reductions in budget allocations for course adjuncts may impact the number of sessional lecturers (Interview Engle-Warnick; Dalkir); however, the program has some flexibility in terms of access to discretionary funds (Interview Engle-Warnick; Prsa), as well as with scheduling of course offerings (Interview Dalkir).

McGill University defines itself as a research-intensive university where priorities include teaching, research and service (Interviews with Provost Manfredi; Dean Maioni (Faculty of Arts);

University website, and Principal's Priorities). As required in Standard III.2, the institution and the program together encourage excellence in teaching, research, and service as evidenced by a course release during the first year for new faculty, encouragement to bring research expertise to bear on course content and pedagogy and to integrate new teaching strategies in their courses, start-up funds (\$10,000 - \$15,000) for newly appointed faculty, professional development funds (\$500 per annum) to attend conferences, join professional associations, purchase books, hardware, software, and travel awards (\$1,500 every two years) through application (SS, pp. 121-122, 148). The program is notable in having two members of full-time faculty (Moffatt; Fung) holding prestigious, competitive Canada Research Chairs (CRCs) (Faculty CVs; Interview Engle-Warnick). A third (Guastavino) holds the Dawson Chair which is equivalent to a Tier II CRC chair (Dalkir factual corrections). The SIS program provides a stimulating learning and research environment as evidenced by sabbatical leaves of a period of twelve months (or two six month periods in different academic years) (SS, p. 123) for tenured faculty, by offering support and training for developing teaching skills and strategies through courses offered by McGill's Teaching and Learning Services (SS, p. 121; interview Winer (TLS), and for faculty applying for external research funding, through support (workshops; information sessions) offered by the McGill Office of Sponsored Research (OSR) (SS, p. 122). McGill's Research and International Relations unit provides Internal Research Funds to support full-time faculty in pursuit of their research programs and projects (SS, p. 122). There is no formal mentoring program for tenure-track or tenured faculty; however, informal mentoring from more experienced colleagues, from colleagues within the program as well as across campus, and from ready access to the program Director occurs (full-time faculty interviewed on-site).

Per Standard III.3, policies that address recruitment and retention of a diverse faculty exist (SS (pp. 123-126). McGill University's personnel policies are published and accessible on the McGill website (<http://www.mcgill.ca/secretariate/policies/academic/>) (*Regulations relating to the employment of*

*tenure track and tenured academic staff*; SS 123). Personnel policies are shared with newly hired faculty (Interview Dalkir). Position expectations are reviewed by the Director with each new member of faculty, while every new hire has an orientation briefing with McGill Human Resources. The program provided information about the diversity of current faculty members (Faculty CVs). Data on the gender distribution of applicants, interviewees, and appointees must be reported to University administration (SS, p. 124); however, in accordance with Canadian federal and provincial human rights and labour legislation, applicants are not required to disclose personal information relating to race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, gender identity, disability, or other contributors to diversification (SS, p. 124). Since 2007, a voluntary Employment Equity Self-Identification Form has been made available to applicants upon request. Current faculty recruitment strategies seek to solicit applications from a variety and broad diversity of potential candidates but with no specific targets (SS p. 124; interview Provost). The current full-time faculty is comprised of 7 females and 5 males; diversity of faculty beyond gender is discernible face-to-face, but specific data descriptive of diversity are neither collected, nor, by law, reported.

Per Standard, III.4, faculty have qualifications for their respective designated teaching areas, technological and teaching skills and knowledge appropriate to their responsibilities and active participation in relevant organizations (Faculty CVs, course syllabi [MyCourses online], summaries of faculty teaching evaluations on-site, interviews with faculty and Director on-site, list of selected awards and leadership positions of program faculty; SS pp. 127-131). Each full-time faculty member has a sustained record of accomplishment in research or other appropriate scholarship to contribute to the knowledge base of the field and to their professional development (III.5). Consistent with the research-intensive focus of McGill, program full-time faculty hold competitive grants from national (e.g., SSHRC; CIHR; NSERC; MITACS) and provincial (e.g. FRQS; FQRNT; FQRSC) agencies, and have published in a variety of peer-reviewed journals (e.g. JASIS&T; IPM; Information Research; CAIS; JDoc) and presented at

national and international conferences (Interview Manfredi; Maioni; Engle-Warnick; SS, Table 17, Table 18; faculty CVs).

The faculty hold advanced degrees from a variety of institutions and evidence diversity of backgrounds (III.6). Program faculty doctorates were earned from Canadian institutions (Western (1); McGill (1); Toronto (3); U de Montréal (1); Concordia (1); Simon Fraser (1), and British Columbia (1)), from universities in the United States (UCLA (1); Texas A&M (Cook – cross-appointed)) and from institutions internationally (U Paris 6 (1); Tilburg (1)). Scholarly backgrounds include computer science, engineering, library and information science, education, history, biology, business administrations, psychoacoustics, among others (Faculty CVs; SS, pp. 113-114; SS, pp. 143-148). In addition, they demonstrate skill in academic planning and assessment (SS, pp. 146-148; Faculty CVs), relevant professional experience, interaction with faculty in other disciplines (e.g., music; education; bioinformatics; computer science; digital humanities; medicine), and continuing liaison with the field (e.g., memberships in scholarly associations, ASIS&T, CAIS, ALISE; in professional associations, SLA, IFLA, ARL, MLA, CHLA) (SS, pp. 143-144; faculty CVs; interview Dalkir; meetings with McGill faculty from other disciplines and with alumni, employers representing the field).

Faculty assignments relate to both the needs of the program and to the competencies of the individual faculty members (III.7). (Faculty CVs; interviews with faculty and Dalkir on-site; SS, pp. 148-150). The documentation confirms that a systematic evaluation process for all faculty is practiced (III.8) (SS, pp. 151-154; Interviews Dalkir, individual faculty, Engle-Warnick; summaries of student evaluations of courses and faculty on-site). Further, faculty evaluation considers accomplishment and innovation in teaching, research, and service (SS, pp. 151-152). Within parameters of the institution's policies, faculty, students and others are involved in the evaluation process (SS, pp. 154-155; interviews on-site with Dalkir, individual faculty, and students engaged in governance; Curriculum Committee representatives; Nash).

Per Standard III.9, the program employs data from evaluation of faculty to improve the program and plan for the future. Data from student evaluations of courses and instructors is taken into account during the annual faculty merit exercise to suggest areas for individual improvement in teaching and a recommendation to attend a Teaching and Learning Skills Workshop offered by McGill's TLS. Informal feedback from employers and students regarding needed improvements to courses and/or to instruction/instructors is also referred to the Curriculum Committee where appropriate mechanisms for addressing changes are determined (with the instructor, with the course, with the program more broadly) (SS, pp. 154-155; Interviews with Dalkir and students engaged in governance).

In summary, the program's faculty are highly productive scholars who are engaged in funded and unfunded research and publication with one another, with other faculty at McGill, and with scholars beyond the campus. They are involved in scholarly and professional associations, accessible to their students, and committed to supporting the learning experience through student advising and informal mentoring. They are also deeply committed to the future of the program now that its transition to the Faculty of Arts, the planned hiring of 6 faculty (targeted in 2009 strategic plan), the revisions to program curriculum begun in 2010, and the confirmation of a new Director (June 1, 2016) have been completed.

The increase in the faculty complement to its current steady state of twelve suggests that a more formal program mentoring of pre-tenure and tenured faculty across the career track might provide a more consistent direction for a faculty clustered in the ranks of Assistant and Associate Professors. While full-time faculty were very positive towards the accessibility offered by the program Director, and her openness to working with individuals on goals and objectives as part of the annual merit exercise, the need for a more transparent approach to defining criteria and their relative weighting for assessing individual teaching, research, and service for merit awards was raised by many faculty members (Onsite interviews faculty).

## STANDARD IV: STUDENTS

Per Standard IV.1, the program formulates, reviews, and revises policies for student recruitment, admissions, retention, financial aid, career services, and other administrative policies that are consistent with the program's mission, goals, and objectives.

Enrollment has declined slightly over the years with a high of 230 in 2013 and 2014, and a low of 202 in 2010. Enrollment in 2015 was 205 (SS, pp. 159-160). The program was advertised through the development and dissemination of new brochures, flyers, and posters in 2014. In addition, digital advertisements were distributed in 2014 and 2015.

The program works to recruit and retain students who reflect the diversity of North America's communities. While federal and provincial legislation prohibit the program from gathering information on race, religion and sexual orientation, in 2015-16, over 60% of the applicants are from outside Quebec, 39% from other parts of Canada, 12% from the US, and 15%, other countries (SS, p. 161). The Director is exploring marketing opportunities to further extend the recruitment reach of the program both in numbers of new students as well as diversity (Interview Dalkir).

Per Standard IV.2, an examination of the program website affirmed that current information about the program is readily accessible to students and the general public. The information includes documentation of progress toward achievement of program goals and objectives, curricular descriptions, information about faculty, admission requirements, financial aid opportunities, criteria for student performance evaluation, placement, and other policies and procedures. Detailed information on the program's goals, objectives, and learning outcomes is also available on the website and is supplemented by a yearly updated MIST Student Handbook which was examined on-site. The use of social media connects students to current activities within the program (SS, p. 158; Interview Nash).

Financial support is described on the website and through the Graduate Fellowships Awards Calendar and includes information on scholarships, fellowship prizes, and travel support. Students are

routinely hired as graduate, research and IT lab assistants as well as Teaching Assistants (TAs) for undergraduate courses in the Faculty of Arts. The Faculty of Arts also supplements travel funding. (Interview Engle-Warnick). It is worth noting that a student in the first MIST cohort was awarded the Canada Graduate Scholarship-Masters research award. (SS, p. 165).

Standards for admission are applied consistently (IV.3). Students admitted must have earned a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution. Policies and procedures for waiving admission requirements are stated clearly and applied consistently. In addition to the bachelor's degree, applicants must have a 3.0 GPA. International, non-English speaking applicants must pass the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language). The program also requires applicants to submit a letter of intent, curriculum vitae, and two letters of support, and to confirm competency in the use of computers (Interview Hubbard).

Admissions are reviewed by the Graduate Admissions and Scholarship Committee which was formed in 2013 to replace the previous practice of the Director and Administrative Assistant handling the process. (SS, p. 171). A formal justification is required if an applicant is accepted who does not fulfill all of the requirements. However, this is a rare occurrence as the program strongly adheres to the admission requirements. The program is very proactive in dealing with referrals. An examination of a selection of admission records was made on-site and showed that standards are applied consistently (Interview Hubbard).

Per Standard IV.4, examination of course outlines plus student assignments and interviews, confirms that students construct coherent plans of study. Students are assigned a faculty advisor prior to their first term to assist in course selection. An Introduction allows students to meet with their faculty advisor in an informal atmosphere, setting the stage for the coming semester and providing students with an opportunity to meet other students and student groups. In addition, every semester includes meetings on advising tips (SS, pp. 172-173; Interview Evans).

A required course, *Foundations of Information Studies*, helps students identify professional and academic plans. This includes a self-assessment, a vision of future achievement, and a strategic plan. A second required course, *Integrating Research and Practice*, taken in the students' final term of study, helps them transition from learning to working. (SS, pp. 174-175; Interview Evans).

Examination of a variety of student assignments on-site confirms that students receive systematic, multi-faceted evaluation of their achievements. Group and individual projects assist students to develop and apply practical skills, which they find very rewarding. (SS, p. 175; student interviews on-site).

Students have access to continuing opportunities for guidance and placement assistance as evidenced by the program's association with the university's SKILLSETS program which offers over 200 workshops and sessions on topics ranging from career development to research management and leadership. In addition, McGill's Career Planning Services (CaPS) offers a variety of courses, both on-site and on campus that are directly related to students' career interests. A review on-site of course offerings revealed the diversity of courses offered. These offerings have high attendance from SIS. (SS, p. 176; Interview Tester)

Per Standard IV.5, students have opportunities to participate in policy-making regarding academic and student affairs (IV.5.1), and to participate in research as evidenced by the offerings of the program (IV.5.2). A second year course, *Integrating Research and Practice*, helps students learn about the applications of research; those choosing to delve further can pursue a 15-credit research project plus a 3-credit research methods course. Student participation in research courses has increased by 60% since 2010/11. Throughout the year, the program presents research colloquia with Canadian and international guest speakers (SS, p. 178).

Student interviews and other evidence including interviews with faculty and others outside the program, confirm that students receive academic and career advisement and other support services

(IV.5.3; IV.5.4). Evidence, including on-site discussions with student chapter representatives from various professional associations, and interviews with other students, supports substantial participation by students, regardless of their location in these associations (IV.5.5) (IV.5.6). (SS, pp. 180-183; student interviews on-site).

In addition to the faculty advisors to assist students with academic and career consultation, alumni events offer mentorship opportunities and help students understand the importance of professional networks. The McGill Information Studies Student Association (MISSA) has organized an annual career fair since 2003 in addition to a myriad of career-related activities organized by students themselves (Interview Nash and students on-site).

It was clarified on-site that the program has three student members attending the Departmental Meeting, all of whom vote, and three student members on the Curriculum Committee, two of whom vote. The first-year student representative is ex officio and does not have a vote. All other MIST students are welcome to attend as non-voting guests (IV.5.1). MISSA is a student-run organization and ensures that any student concerns are made known to the program. It also conducts fundraising activities and organizes a number of social and professional events each year. Students feel their voices are heard on the Curriculum Committee and at the Departmental Meeting (IV.5.5) (Interview Nash and review of Minutes on-site).

Per Standards IV.6 and IV.7, the program engages in systematic evaluation in applying the results of evaluation of student achievement to program development. The program applies formal and informal evaluation processes, including course evaluations, both from a student and faculty perspective. Monitored by the Student Standing and Academic Affairs Committee, which consists of the Director, the MIST Graduate Program Director, the PhD Graduate Program Director, the Student Affairs Coordinator, and a faculty member, assessments resulting in course modifications are integrated in discussions by the Curriculum Committee. In 2015, a course mapping exercise was undertaken and

results were used by the Curriculum Committee, and the Departmental Meeting to address any possible changes to the curriculum, policies, and procedures (SS, p. 183; examples of evaluation documentation examined on-site).

The mapping initiative was instrumental in assisting the program in making decisions about curriculum or policy changes. In addition, two sessions held with faculty to update the learning outcomes resulted in changes to course descriptions and syllabi as well as the identification of overlap in some courses. Requests to revisit certain aspects of courses can be brought by both students and instructors. Any suggested changes are brought to the Curriculum Committee for recommendation and then approval by the Departmental Meeting (Interview Nash).

In 2010, a one-day workshop was held to determine curriculum relevance to the program's Learning Outcomes and whether changes were required. The need to address professional soft skills and more technical information and communication technology skills were identified. As a result, a new course, *Skills for Information Professionals*, was developed to address the need for professional soft skills. In addition, a core course, *Integrating Research and Practice*, was introduced to help students reflect and better measure their individual student learning. Five new faculty members were hired over a four-year period with expertise in the area of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). New courses were developed and existing core and elective courses were revamped to better ensure learning outcomes were met (SS, p. 186; interview Dalkir).

The program applies direct and indirect measures of student learning to decision-making and program planning and improvement (IV.8). The Student Standing and Academic Affairs Committee regularly reviews student learning outcomes. Faculty and sessional instructors review their evaluations and make changes to courses as required. While the program employs data from several sources in evaluating the MIST program, a formal framework for assessment of achievement in relation to student

learning outcomes would strengthen the evaluation process (Minutes of the Curriculum Committee, Student Standing and Academic Affairs Committee; student on-site interviews).

The Curriculum Committee meets monthly and has in-depth discussion of the results of student evaluations with a view to making any changes required. Students are regularly asked about existing courses and those that have not been offered recently. In addition, students have input into determining courses that should be offered (Interviews Nash, a student representative from the Curriculum Committee, and other students on-site).

The ERP particularly noted the stability brought to the program by the 30-year tenure of Ms. Kathryn Hubbard, Administrative and Student Affairs Coordinator, particularly in the areas of student relations and admission expertise. A succession plan is being put in place to allow for a smooth transition when Ms. Hubbard retires.

#### **STANDARD V: ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

According to Dr. Christopher Manfredi, Provost and Vice-Principal (Academic) (telephone interview 9/23/2016), Dr. Antonia Maioni, Dean, Faculty of Arts (telephone interview 9/8/2016), and interviews on-site with Dr. Jim Engle-Warnick, Associate Dean, Research, Faculty of Arts, and Dr. Kimiz Dalkir, Director, SIS, the administration of the University is supporting and investing in the program. The program receives financial support and resources from both the central administration and the Faculty of Arts (similarly from Faculty of Education until Sept. 2015) based on a formula relative to the number of students at the graduate level. This formula is applied University-wide (interview Engle-Warnick). Despite 5.2% operating budget cuts at the institutional level in 2012/2013, the program's operating budget sustained a net increase over the period, 2010/2011 to 2015/2016 to support new faculty hires identified in 2009 and 2012 strategic plans (SS 36, 193-196; A6). Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies provided additional funds for faculty research, and graduate students (SS, pp. 193-195; A20, A30). Interviews conducted prior to the site visit with Provost Manfredi, and Dean Maioni, and the exit

interview on-site with their respective designates, Associate Provost Angela Campbell, and Associate Dean Engle-Warnick, affirmed that the university and Faculty will continue the commitment to the program. As a separate and distinct unit within the Faculty of Arts, the program has sufficient autonomy to assure that it determines its intellectual content, selects and promotes its faculty, and selects its students within general guidelines of the institution (V.1) The program receives, processes, evaluates and conducts the full admission process and forwards its recommendations to Graduate Admissions and Scholarship for institutional sign off. The program is also responsible for the process of hiring faculty and administrative staff and any Teaching and Research Assistants (TAs/RAs) (Interviews with Engle-Warnick, Hubbard). The program is fairly represented on the institution's advisory and policy-making bodies (V.2). (SS, pp.196-198.) Likewise, decisions regarding funding and resource allocation for the program are made on the same basis as for comparable academic units within the institution. (SS, pp. 193-195; A20, A30; Interview Engle-Warnick).

Dr. Dalkir has served as administrative head of the program since June 1, 2016 (she was Interim Director of the SIS for the year previous), reporting to the Dean of the Faculty of Arts (SS, p. 198; interview Dalkir). Dr. Dalkir estimates that she currently spends 60-80% of her time as administrator of the program. The head of the program has comparable title, salary, status, and authority as administrative leaders in comparable units (V.3) (interview Engle-Warnick). In the context that the Director is relatively new and that the program has recently undergone several changes, the administrative head has the leadership skills, administrative ability, experience and understanding of the field and the academic environment to fulfill the responsibilities of the position (interviews Dalkir, various faculty and administrative staff).

The administrative head is perceived to nurture an environment that enhances the pursuit of the program mission and goals and the achievement of its objectives (Interviews with faculty). Students

and faculty are encouraged to interact with other academic units and students are socialized to the field (V.4) (Interviews with faculty and students; SS, pp. 197, 199-200; A21, A29).

The parent institution provides continuing financial support for development, maintenance and enhancement of the master's program (V.5) (Interview Engle-Warnick). Interviews related to faculty compensation confirm that it is equitable and usually sufficient to attract, support and retain personnel (V.7). Access to faculty compensation documentation is restricted by Provincial privacy law; however, "there is a salary range used to negotiate during hiring and annual salary scale increases for faculty are augmented with across the board and merit increases based on individual accomplishment" (SS, p. 202). The McGill University Planning and Institutional Office conducts a survey to monitor faculty salaries across the institution and the Director can identify anomalies and make recommendations for salary adjustments to the Dean and Provost (Interviews Dalkir, Engle-Warnick, faculty, Prsa, Senior Financial Office Faculty of Arts; SS, p. 202). Institutional funds for research support, professional development, travel, and leaves are comparable to other units (V.8) (Interviews Dalkir, Prsa, Nalbantoglu, Dean Graduate and Post-Doctoral Studies (GPS). Further, student financial aid from the parent institution is available on the same basis as in comparable units (Interviews with Engle-Warnick, Dalkir, Nalbantoglu; SS, pp. 203, 132-136; A26, A30).

Per Standards V.9, V.10 and V.11, physical and technological resources well support the program's accomplishment of its goals and objectives, with the exception that the program's administrative building (described below and housed in the Mansion on Peel Street) is not accessible to persons with mobility impairment. This was similarly cited in the last accreditation review. While program and university administration are well aware of this particular aspect of access, it is a University-wide issue due to the heritage designation accorded to several McGill buildings in compliance with the Province of Quebec *Cultural Property Act*. (Exit Briefing, Angela Campbell Associate Provost). The program's building houses 33 offices for faculty (including PhD students) and administrative staff, a

seminar room, casual meeting spaces and kitchen and storage facilities. SIS program students and faculty can access research space, labs, training rooms, and meeting rooms in the adjacent Education Building and in other buildings on campus. There is access to computer labs in the Faculty of Arts and to other IT resources and study spaces throughout the McGill Libraries. Library resources, both print and electronic, are sufficient to support the program (Interviews Colleen Cook, Trenholme Dean of Libraries, McLennan Library Tour and Interview Robin Canuel, Head Librarian Humanities and Social Sciences Library, David Green, SIS Liaison Librarian). Classroom allocation is centralized and adequate with some classrooms available with laptops and audiovisual equipment supported by IT Services. IT support is centralized and provided in various ways including an AV Systems Help hotline and the IT service desk. IT/AV instruction is available via an online tool and the IT Tools section of the myMcGill Portal. Upon hire, faculty can get laptops at no cost when used for specific teaching purposes with a standard “University build”. The Faculty provides IT support and a limited pool of laptops to sessional lecturers. Interview rooms are available for student use via Career Planning Services (CaPS). Likewise, per Standard V.12, services provided by knowledgeable and accessible staff are available as program needs arise (SS, pp. 203-205, 122; Interviews Dalkir, Elise Castagnier, Director Information Systems Resources).

As discussed above, in the context of the program’s transition over the past few years, and per Standard V.13, V.14, and V.15, interviews confirmed the program’s intention to pursue a systematic planning and evaluation process to review its administrative policies and its resource requirements; further the ERP confirmed that the process involves faculty, staff, students and other constituents when appropriate (Interviews Dalkir, Shannon Sullivan, Administrative Assistant (appointed September 1, 2016), Cathy Venetico, Administrative Clerk). For example, with Sullivan the new Administrative Assistant now in place, the program is undertaking a systematic review and evaluation of Practicum administration to include input from practicum supervisors, students, and faculty (particularly those

who have administered the Practicum previously), and reorganization of various administrative tasks which will involve administrative staff and faculty (Interviews with Dalkir, Hubbard).

In summary, the ERP confirmed that the program's administrative, fiscal, and physical resources contribute to its success. Mobility access to the program's administrative building persists as an issue within Standard V, even as the program offers accommodations, and the university provides fully accessible resources and services supportive of teaching and learning. While various elements of a planning process are already in place, the program will benefit from formalizing planning and evaluation processes into a more integrated, constituent-inclusive, demonstrable, and documented framework that moves through strategy to implementation and finally assessment of administration, finances, and resources.

## SUMMARY

The McGill University Master of Information Studies (MIS<sup>t</sup>) program has undergone a substantial transition since the last accreditation. Over the period, 2010 through 2016, it has:

- implemented a substantially revised two-degree MIS<sup>t</sup> curriculum (course-based; research-based) from which the first cohort has graduated in Spring 2016;
- completed its hiring process to increase the full-time faculty complement to twelve;
- moved its administrative affiliation and reporting from the Faculty of Education to the Faculty of Arts (since 2014);
- appointed a new Director (Dalkir, June 1, 2016)

As it has continued to implement its strategic planning framework first articulated in 2009, it has done so within a context of leadership provided by a newly appointed Dean of the Faculty of Arts (2016), and Provost (2015). Both were uniformly positive in their assessment of the program and its direction, while mindful and encouraging of opportunities opening to the program as a professional school with a strong interdisciplinary research orientation situated within the Faculty of Arts.

The ERP confirmed that the program: is well-resourced and supported; has an engaged and productive faculty that, while fully committed to teaching and to the student learning experience, is also forging funded, interdisciplinary research connections in alignment with McGill University's research-intensive focus; continues to consistently attract a stable cohort of high quality students in the course-based option, while beginning to attract into the research-based option more applicants with interests in innovative research; is recognized by students as creating and maintaining a collegial, inclusive environment, a flexible program and curriculum that accommodates student input and engagement, and a vibrant community of local, national, and international networks supportive of student professional development.

As the School of Information Studies moves through final implementation of the substantially revised two-degree option MIST program, it has an opportunity to focus more on systematic processes as indicators of what is working or not become more apparent. During the ERP site visit, the program Director, faculty, and staff spoke of plans to initiate another round of planning, beginning with a broad constituent Forum towards the end of 2016, as well as completing learning outcome mappings to courses, and engaging the Curriculum Committee in applying feedback from evaluation and assessment mechanisms to continuous program improvement. Necessary to those processes will be an articulation of specific, constituent-focused measures of achievement to be systematically applied in assessment. As the program's strategic framework articulated in 2009 is nearing completion, it is opportune for the program to consider and document its direction moving forward, particularly as the Provost is initiating development of a new university Strategic Planning framework beyond 2017. Likewise, Provostial initiatives to enhance student diversity through outreach to underrepresented communities, and particularly indigenous students, may provide institutional infrastructure supportive of SIS program initiatives to explore ways to attract a similarly representative student body. Finally, while the ERP confirmed accommodation of persons with disabilities through accessible classrooms, libraries,

computer and other laboratories, and other learning and study spaces on campus, and through the provision of program faculty off-site office hours for consultation and meeting, the program's administrative building is not readily accessible to persons with mobility impairment.

## **Appendix I**

### **Sources of Evidence Consulted Prior to or During Site Visit**

The Final Report of the McGill External Review Panel (ERP) is based on a wide variety of evidence, including, but not limited to the following:

- The McGill School of Information Studies *Self-Study* (May 30, 2016 Draft; August 15, 2016 Final)
- the program website (<https://www.mcgill.ca/sis/home>)
- CVs of full-time, retired, and affiliated faculty, CVs and associated course syllabi for sessional instructors (SS Appendices)
- course syllabi (guest login via myCourses, McGill's Learning Management System)
- a mapping of student learning outcomes to courses (Appendix 12; Feb 5, 2016 version)
- various meeting agenda and minutes (SS, Appendices and on-site)
- student records (confidential: on-site only)
- various reports relating to, for example, strategic planning, curriculum review, and to the administrative move from Faculty of Education to Faculty of Arts (Appendices and on-site)
- survey data (e.g., Placement and Employment Survey; Course Evaluation Questionnaire; summary of Teaching Evaluation data)
- samples of student work (on-site)
- a selection of faculty publications (on-site)
- ALISE statistical reports (on-site)
- budget data (confidential data provided on-site only)
- interviews and meetings held prior to and on-site (see Appendix II)

**Appendix II**  
**Groups and Individuals Interviewed Prior to**  
**or During Site Visit**

1. The External Review Panel (ERP) conducted **group** meetings on-site with:
  - 11 Master of Information Studies (MIS) degree students (attended a pizza lunch)
  - 4 student representatives to SIS Committees
  - 5 professional association student chapter representatives
  - 4 Development Officers [Lisa Baum, Alesia Rudnitskaya, Joanne Gottlieb, Anne Brouillard] from the centre (McGill) and Faculty of Arts, respectively
  - 15 individuals representative of employers, sessional instructors, graduates/alumni, and McGill researchers engaging with SIS faculty on funded projects. The ERP requested an opportunity to speak with employers representing public and school libraries in Montreal; a telephone interview was conducted with two (Richter; O'Neill, September 26).
2. ERP members also interviewed the following **individuals**:

**Prior to site visit via telephone interview:**

- Prof. Christopher P. Manfredi, Provost and Vice-Principal (Academic) (23 September, 2016)
- Prof. Antonia Maioni, Dean, Faculty of Arts (8 September, 2016)

**On-site individual interviews with:**

- Prof. Josephine Nalbantoglu, Dean, Graduate and Post-Doctoral Studies
- Prof. Jim Engle-Warnick, Associate Dean, Research, Faculty of Arts (and Dean's designate)
- Prof. Kimiz Dalkir, Director, School of Information Studies (extensive interview with panel 10/25/2016, and as required throughout the site visit)
- Elise Castagnier, Director, Information Systems Resources in IT Services (McGill)
- Elizabeth Nash, McGill Information Studies Student Association (MISSA) President
- Dr. Colleen Cook, Trenholme Dean of Libraries
- Robin Canuel, Head Librarian, Humanities and Social Sciences Library
- Dr. Laura Winer, Director, Teaching and Learning Services
- Nancy Prsa, Senior Financial Officer, Faculty of Arts
- Tynan Jarrett, Social Equity and Diversity Education Office (McGill)
- Janice Tester, Career Planning Services (CaPS) (McGill)
- David Green, Liaison Librarian (McGill Libraries)
- Prof. Karyn Moffatt, MIS Graduate Program Director (SIS)
- Prof. Catherine Guastavino, PhD Graduate Program Director (SIS)
- Kathryn Hubbard, Cathy Venetico, SIS program administrative staff (interviewed individually)
- Shannon Sullivan, SIS program Administrative Assistant (newly hired – also assistant to the SIS Director)

Finally, with the exception of Professors France Bouthillier (sabbatical) and Benjamin Fung (travelling), the panel interviewed on-site every member of full-time faculty, i.e., Professors Joan Bartlett, Jamshid Beheshti, Kimiz Dalkir, Max Evans, Ilja Frissen, Catherine Guastavino, Charles-Antoine Julien, Elaine Ménard, Karen Moffat, and Eun Park. The program Director provided the panel with a list of sessional instructors, their CVs and contact information prior to the site visit (e-mail correspondence; additional e-file appendices). ERP members also talked individually with a selection (4) of sessional instructors on-site.