Université d'Ottawa

Faculté des arts

École des sciences de l'information

University of Ottawa

Faculty of Arts

School of Information Studies

1 March 2015

American Library Association
Office for Accreditation
50 East Huron Street
Chicago, Illinois 60611-2795
USA

Dear Dr. Stansbury,

In accordance with the stipulation set out in the Committee of Accreditation (COA/the Committee) of American Library Association decision letter of January 26, 2014 granting initial accreditation to the MIS program offered by the School of Information Studies (ÉSIS) at the University of Ottawa, I am pleased to submit the enclosed Special Report.

As requested, the special report provides an update on:

- Continuing evidence that the program is incorporating direct and indirect assessment measures of student learning outcomes in systematic planning (Standard I.3).

- Evidence that the program is applying the results of evaluation of student achievement to program development (Standard IV.6).

In preparing the report we have focused on actions taken in relation to the above standards in the 18 months since the submission of our school's *Program Presentation* in August 2013.

The ÉSIS thanks the Committee members for their consideration and efforts.

Yours sincerely,

Daniel J. Paré
Interim Director and Associate Professor

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Special Report

**Submitted to the American Library Association Committee on Accreditation
by the School of Information Studies (ÉSIS), University of Ottawa**

March 1, 2015

In its January 26, 2014 decision letter granting initial accreditation to the MIS program offered by the School of Information Studies (ÉSIS) at the University of Ottawa, the Committee on Accreditation (COA/the Committee) requested that a special report be submitted by March 1, 2015 to provide an update on:

- Continuing evidence that the program is incorporating direct and indirect assessment measures of student learning outcomes in systematic planning (Standard I.3).
- Evidence that the program is applying the results of evaluation of student achievement to program development (Standard IV.6).

This report focuses on actions taken in relation to the above standards in the 18 months since the submission of our school's *Program Presentation* in August 2013.

1. Assessment of student learning outcomes (Standard I.3)

The formalization of our program planning process through the development of a program planning framework was reported in our *Program Presentation* (pp. 11-12). The formalized planning process operates on a four-year cycle that encompasses: (i) the establishment of goals and objectives; (ii) the setting of priorities and the development of action plans; (iii) the assessment of progress in achieving program goals and objectives; and (iv) the refocusing of priorities and the refinement of plans.

As outlined in the *Program Presentation* (pp. 18-21), our program objectives are framed as student learning outcomes centering on six broad areas of competence: (i) knowledge base; (ii) research and evaluation skills; (iii) planning and problem solving; (iv) communication skills; (v) professional values and ethics; and (vi) initiative, teamwork, and self assessment.

In the *Program Presentation* (pp. 21-29), we reported on a broad range of mechanisms that we use to assess progress in the achievement of program goals and objectives. These include: capstone courses and the master's thesis; grade averages for core courses; employer assessments of CO-OP placements and experiential learning projects; student course evaluations; work placement reports submitted by students completing CO-OP and experiential learning assignments; surveys of students conducted as they enter the program, mid-way through, and as they complete their studies; surveys of CO-OP students; surveys of our alumni; consultation with advisory committees; and focus groups and interviews with students, employers, and graduates of the program.

We continue to use these mechanisms to collect data relating to student learning outcomes, to refine our assessment measures, and to further integrate the assessment results into our planning process.

1.1 Data collection

Data pertaining to student learning outcomes are collected on an ongoing basis. Evidence of this is presented in our *Summary of Student Achievement* that reports on:

- The number of students successfully completing an iPortfolio each year;
- The number of students successfully defending a thesis each year;
- The aggregate grade averages for core courses for each year;
- The aggregate figures on employers' ratings of students participating in the CO-OP option;
- The number of students successfully completing experiential learning projects; and
- Post-degree employment rates, as derived from the annual survey of alumni.

In addition,

- aggregate ratings from student course evaluations are maintained by the university and are accessible to all registered students and the school's faculty;
- the aggregated results of surveys of students and alumni are reviewed by faculty and kept on file; and
- testimonials from focus groups and interviews with students, employers, and graduates of the program are reviewed by faculty and kept on file.

1.2 Refinement of assessment measures

Over the past two years, a number of the mechanisms we use to assess student learning outcomes have been refined to provide a more fine-grained measure of specific learning outcomes, and to reflect changes in the program resulting from revisions to the curriculum implemented in the autumn of 2014. Among these refinements are the following:

- Realignment of the evaluation rubric for the iPortfolio capstone following a review of the rubric used in the "beta" test.
- Realignment of the evaluation rubric designed for the case problem capstone following a reworking of the proposed course design.
- Alignment of course objectives and evaluation criteria for the core courses in the revised curriculum with program-level student learning outcomes.
- Alignment of course objectives and evaluation criteria for elective courses in the revised curriculum with program-level student learning outcomes.

The questionnaires used to survey students as they enter the program, mid-way through, and as they complete their studies are currently being reviewed to provide better alignment with both the student learning outcomes and the revised curriculum. Revised questionnaires will be used in future surveys of students who commenced their program of study under the revised curriculum in the autumn of 2014.

1.3 Integration of assessment results into the planning process

The upcoming year (May 2015–April 2016) in the school's four-year planning cycle focuses on teaching and learning. In preparation we have mapped the nine mechanisms we use to assess student learning onto the eleven specific student learning outcomes set out in the *Program Presentation* (pp. 18-19). The assessment mechanisms are categorized on the basis of direct versus indirect measures, and quantitative versus qualitative indices (see Appendix 1).

Five mechanisms provide direct measures of student learning outcomes. One assesses learning outcomes at the course level in the form of faculty assessments of coursework. Another assesses learning outcomes at the experiential/profession level in the form of employer assessments of CO-OP and experiential learning assignments. The three other mechanisms in this category are designed to provide direct measures of learning outcomes at the program level: (i) iPortfolios; (ii) case problem capstones; and (iii) the master's thesis.

The four mechanisms providing indirect measures include three indicators reflecting individual students' perspectives about their learning experience (i.e., course evaluations; work placement reports; and the CO-OP, exit, and alumni surveys) and one indicator reflecting the perspective of employers (i.e., post-degree employment statistics).

We are currently in the process of identifying the data derived from these assessment mechanisms that we can use for program planning and evaluation. As part of this process, we are consulting with senior staff of the University of Ottawa to ensure compliance with university policies respecting the collection and use of student-related data. Once this process is completed, we will begin compiling and collating, in accordance with university policy, the selective data for the years 2013-2014 and 2014-2015. This will provide us with an overview, through multiple assessment mechanisms, of the extent to which each of the eleven student learning outcomes are being realized for the years measured.

As we begin the 2015-2016 planning year, which, as noted above, focuses on teaching and learning, the data being gathered will be reviewed to identify relative strengths and limitations with respect to specific learning outcomes, and will serve as input to the assessment of progress in achieving our program objectives.

2. Recent program developments (Standard IV.6)

The results of the evaluation of student achievement through the mechanisms described above, as well as through less formal assessment mechanisms, are used by the school's administration and faculty as part of a continuous review of the program's performance. The review process, both formal and informal, serves to bring into focus the program's successes as well as areas that may benefit from further development and refinement.

Throughout the 18-month period since the submission of our *Program Presentation*, ongoing evaluation of student achievement has influenced developments relating to several aspects of the ÉSIS program. These are highlighted below.

2.1 Implementation of the revised curriculum

The revised curriculum, implemented in the autumn of 2014, is the result of a comprehensive curriculum review exercise that was undertaken in 2012-2013 (see the *Program Presentation*, pp. 49-50). The revised curriculum is designed to ensure that all students receive a solid grounding in the core competencies of the profession, and to formalize the capstone experience as a program requirement (see the *Program Presentation*, pp. 38-40). All students admitted into the program under the revised curriculum are required to take seven core courses, and must complete a capstone experience during their last semester in the program. A revised suite of elective courses was designed to add depth to the knowledge and skills gained through the core courses, and to provide students with opportunities to further broaden their knowledge and competencies.

The school's Departmental Assembly approved the revised curriculum in September 2013. Three months later, the Executive Committee of the Senate of the University of Ottawa approved our request for a program change. We were advised of the Senate decision at the end of January 2014. The revised curriculum came into effect in the autumn of 2014.

In the autumn and early winter of 2013-2014, the school's faculty worked collectively to develop course outlines for each of the seven core courses in the revised curriculum, aligning course objectives with the student learning outcomes that had been defined for the program. As individual faculty members have prepared the elective courses offered in the autumn of 2014 and the winter of 2015, they have also ensured that the course objectives for these electives reflect the program's objectives and complement the core courses. The assignments and exams used in both the core courses and the electives have also been designed to serve as effective instruments for evaluating student learning outcomes.

2.2 iPortfolio

The iPortfolio capstone experience, which was run as a pilot and then as a beta test in 2012-2013, was offered as an elective course in the winter of 2014, pending its implementation as one of a suite of required capstone experiences for students entering the program in 2014-2015 under the revised curriculum.

The pilot and beta test provided an opportunity to experiment with the design of the iPortfolio course, to test the technology platform supporting the development of personalized portfolios, and to fine-tune the evaluation rubric. As a result of assessments undertaken during the pilot and beta test, significant changes have been made to the guidelines that are given to students for developing their portfolios, as well as to the evaluation rubric. The technology platform used in the pilot and beta tests, Mahara, has been replaced with the more widely deployed and user-friendly WordPress platform.

In the autumn of 2013, information sessions introducing and promoting the iPortfolio course as an optional elective for the winter 2014 semester were held for students in the program who had not participated in the pilot or beta test. In the autumn of 2014, the iPortfolio was introduced as an option for the required capstone experience for students admitted into the program under the revised curriculum.

2.3 Case Problem

The preliminary case problem that had been developed as the basis for a second capstone experience option was further refined by a team of faculty members during 2013-2014, and presented to the school's Departmental Assembly, along with a course outline and an evaluation rubric in September 2014. Offering the case problem as a pilot run during the winter of 2015 for students completing the program that semester was the intention. Despite the pilot being ready and listed as a course offering, we were nonetheless obliged to cancel the offering because of insufficient enrolment.

It is important to note, however, that the case problem is an optional elective for the 2013-2015 student cohort. Under the revised curriculum the capstone experience is now a requirement for all students. As such, plans are in place to offer the case problem in the winter 2016 semester when the students who entered the program in the autumn of 2014 under the revised curriculum will be in their final semester and, therefore, required to complete a capstone experience in order to graduate from the MIS program.

2.4 Thesis Option

Since 2013, three students in the MIS program have successfully completed a master's thesis. Based on some of the lessons learned through the students' experiences in preparing their theses, as well as the experiences of faculty members acting as thesis supervisors, the school has drafted a set of guidelines for preparing both a thesis proposal and the thesis itself. The document provides students with information about the expectations of an ÉSIS thesis and strategies for realizing these objectives. The draft has been reviewed by the school's faculty and is currently being revised. Once the document has been finalized it will be made available to all students in the program, so that those who are considering the thesis option will have a better understanding of what is involved and will be better prepared to engage successfully in the thesis experience.

It should also be noted that under the revised curriculum, all students choosing the thesis option are required to successfully complete the Advanced Research Methods in Information Studies course before starting their thesis work.

2.5 CO-OP and Experiential Learning

In the last 18 months, 25 students have completed 50 CO-OP work placements in both Anglophone and Francophone working environments. Students enrolled in the CO-OP option during this period have been retained by the same organization to complete the two required placements constituting the core of the CO-OP option. Put simply, our CO-OP students have been spending two semesters working for the same employer as opposed to working for different employers in each of their two CO-OP semesters.

Organizations with whom ÉSIS students have completed CO-OP placements include:

Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada; Agence du Revenu Canada; Carleton University; Courts Administrative Services; Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada; Justice Canada; Library and Archives Canada; Library of Parliament;

National Defence and the Canadian Forces; Public Works and Government Services Canada; Service des bibliothèques du Nouveau-Brunswick; Statistics Canada; Université du Québec en Outaouais; University of Ottawa

The tables below summarize the evaluation ratings of the placements by the employers and by the students, respectively.

**Employer Assessments of CO-OP Placements
(Autumn 2013 through Autumn 2014)**

Employer's Rating	Frequency of Rating (N=25)
Exceptional	8
Excellent	16
Very good	1
Good	0
Needs improvement	0
Unsatisfactory	0

**Student Assessments of CO-OP Placements
(Autumn 2013 through Autumn 2014)**

Student's Rating	Frequency of Rating (N=25)
Very satisfied	8
Satisfied	17
Dissatisfied	0
Very Dissatisfied	0
Not Applicable	0

The employer ratings of student CO-OP placements indicate that our MIS program continues to provide a strong foundation for the work experience, with students in the program meeting and exceeding the employers' expectations while on their placements. The school continues its efforts to attract employers to participate in the CO-OP program, and encourages students to identify additional employers with whom a placement might be arranged.

Similarly, in developing experiential learning projects we work to develop productive experiences through a balanced student contribution / employer mentorship approach, and to assist employer partners and students alike in developing achievable goals and timelines for evaluation. In the 2013-2014 academic year, four ÉSIS students participated in experiential learning outside of CO-OP. The projects included:

▪ A prison library project under the supervision of the head cataloguer of the University of Ottawa Library. Both the student and the supervisor were extremely pleased with the work

in this project, which was a key initiative in the school's focus on community engagement for this year and was featured in the University of Ottawa *Gazette*. See, http://www.gazette.uottawa.ca/2014/02/books-for-prisoners-student-creates-library-at-hull-penitentiary

- A project examining the status of research data management services at mid-sized academic libraries across Canada in which the student worked with the head of the government information section of Carleton University Library. The results of this research project were presented at the IASIST conference in June 2014.
- Under the direction of interim head librarian of the Saint Paul University library, two students worked with librarians and faculty members to facilitate usage of Saint Paul's unique collection through the development of collections guides and other tools.

There continues to be more employers interested in working with ÉSIS students through experiential learning than available/willing students. Unfortunately, there are no students participating in experiential learning in the current academic year due, in part, to the popularity of our CO-OP program and the hesitancy of some to engage in labour that is not remunerated. Discussions aimed at revising the manner in which experiential learning opportunities are designed and administered are ongoing among faculty and with the school's student association.

2.6 Information Crossroads

The winter 2015 year has marked a transformation of the ÉSIS Research Conversations series into what we are now calling the Information Crossroads series. The motivation for the change in title is to broaden this speaker series beyond presentations of current research projects to include sessions lead by information professionals, academics, and students, as well as researchers, on topics of interest to the community at large, with a view to providing a venue for discussion and the exchange of ideas across various sectors of the community. Three sessions are held in each of the autumn and winter semesters.

2.7 ÉSIS Thesaurus of Information Studies

As the result of informal assessment over the past several years of the bilingual dimension of our program, we recognized a need to provide students with assistance in developing a solid professional vocabulary in both English and French. In response to this need, and with the assistance of a development grant that was awarded to one of our faculty members in 2013, ÉSIS is developing a bilingual thesaurus of information studies. The ÉSIS Thesaurus of Information Studies / Thésaurus des sciences de l'information comprises two vocabularies—one in English, the other in French—covering terms for concepts in the field of information studies as reflected in our MIS program, systematically organized, with links between equivalences in the two languages. The thesauri are designed to serve as both a linguistic resource for students in the program, and as a pedagogical tool. A number of faculty members have incorporated the thesauri into classroom instruction, and have designed course assignments involving students in developing the thesauri by identifying concepts to be added, providing sources and definitions for terms, delineating relationships between concepts, and identifying linguistic equivalences between the English and French vocabularies.

2.8 Graduate Placement

Both the School and individual faculty members play a key role in assisting students to identify employment opportunities. One of the most frequently used channels in this regard is the posting of job opportunities in the school's weekly *ÉSIS Digest*.

We are also in the process of adding a new section to the school's recently redesigned website that will highlight community events and opportunities for professional networking. University policy precludes the school from posting external job opportunities on its web site at this time.

Twenty-three students graduated from our program in 2014 (22 MIS degree, 1 graduate diploma in IS), 16 of whom responded to an informal survey conducted in the first week of February 2015. Twelve of the respondents reported having either become employed since graduating or obtaining a promotion with their existing employer as a direct result of having completed the MIS degree. The four other respondents were with the same employer for whom they had been working while pursuing their studies, and were already working in intermediate-to-senior level positions when admitted into the MIS program. Two of these four respondents reported that, despite not receiving an official promotion their professional responsibilities had increased since completing the program. Fifteen of the respondents noted that their current positions drew directly upon a range of skills and knowledge they had obtained through the MIS program.

The positions held by those responding to the informal survey included the following:

- Administrator/Marketing Coordinator
- Cataloguing Librarian
- Children's Librarian
- Collection Development Librarian
- Coordinator for Information Literacy, Digital Citizenship and School Libraries
- Department Head, Archives and Research Collections
- Digital Repository Coordinator
- Documentalist
- e-Resources Technician
- Information Management Consultant
- Information Specialist/Librarian
- Interim Management Librarian
- Reference Librarian
- Senior Policy Analyst
- Senior Project Officer
- Strategic Research Analyst

The success of ÉSIS graduates in gaining employment within the information professions is perhaps the most indicative measure of their achievement as students in the MIS program. The knowledge and skills they gain within the classroom, in their work experiences as part of the CO-OP program or through experiential learning projects, in the research they conduct in preparing a master's thesis, and in their engagement with the community through participation

in events such as those offered in the Information Crossroads series all contribute to building a solid foundation for productive careers as information professionals.

Through the ongoing, systematic evaluation of student learning outcomes and achievements, and continuous development and improvement of our MIS program, the school endeavours to maintain the level of success our graduates have attained in recent years in launching their professional careers.

Appendix 1: Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Mechanisms

■ Quantitative Indicator
□ Qualitative Indicator

Student Learning Outcomes:
On successful completion of the Master of Information Studies (MIS) program, students will have demonstrated, in both English and French, that they:

Student Learning Outcomes	Direct Measures					Indirect Measures			
	Faculty assessments of course work	Employer assessments (COOP & Experiential learning)	iPortfolio	Case Problem	Thesis	Course evaluations	Work placement reports	CO-OP, exit and alumni surveys	Employment statistics
1. Knowledge Base									
Understand the interrelationships between information policies and services and the social, political, economic, cultural, and technological context within which they operate.	■		■	■	□	■	□	■	■
Understand the concepts, theories, principles, and practices that underpin information policies, programs, and services, and their management.	■		■	■	□	■		■	■
2. Research and Evaluation Skills									
Assess the appropriateness of research methodologies to questions under investigation, and evaluate research findings and applications for their relevance to the field.	■		■	■	□			■	
Assess and evaluate information sources, technologies, policies, practices, and services for their effectiveness in meeting a diversity of program and user needs.	■		■	■			□		

■ Quantitative Indicator
□ Qualitative Indicator

Student Learning Outcomes:
On successful completion of the Master of Information Studies (MIS) program, students will have demonstrated, in both English and French, that they:

	Direct Measures					Indirect Measures			
	Faculty assessments of course work	*Employer assessments (COOP & Experiential learning)*	*iPortfolio*	*Case Problem*	*Thesis*	*Course evaluations*	*Work placement reports*	*CO-OP, exit and alumni surveys*	*Employment statistics*
3. Planning and Problem Solving									
Develop effective program and service plans, and devise solutions to problems encountered in the administration of information policies and in the management and delivery of information services.	■	■	■	■				■	■
Adapt existing and emerging information practices and technologies to meet evolving program and user needs.	■	■	■	■					■
4. Communication Skills									
Communicate clearly and effectively in a professional environment using media, modes, and models appropriate to the content, audience, and objectives of the communications message.	■	■	■	■	□			■	■
5. Professional Values and Ethics									
Understand the role that personal and professional values and ethics play in the formulation of information policies, the design and delivery of information services, and the advancement of the profession.	■		■	■			□	■	
Recognize the value of the contributions that are made to the field through education, research, leadership, service, and continuous professional development.	■		■						

		Direct Measures				Indirect Measures			
■ Quantitative Indicator □ Qualitative Indicator **Student Learning Outcomes:** *On successful completion of the Master of Information Studies (MIS) program, students will have demonstrated, in both English and French, that they:*	*Faculty assessments of course work*	*Employer assessments (COOP & Experiential learning)*	*iPortfolio*	*Case Problem*	*Thesis*	*Course evaluations*	*Work placement reports*	*CO-OP, exit and alumni surveys*	*Employment statistics*
6. Initiative, Teamwork, and Self-Assessment									
Exercise initiative, and work effectively as an individual, in teams, and in partnerships.	■	■	■	■				■	■
Assess their personal strengths relative to the requirements of the profession.			■				□	■	