



FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN Cyclical Program Review

MDES in Strategic Foresight & Innovation, School of Graduate Studies

GENERAL INFORMATION	
Period of Cyclical Review:	July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2024
Dean, SGS:	Ashok Mathur
Program Review Team:	Michele Mastroeni (Team Lead), Suzanne Stein (Team Lead until Winter 2025); Nabil Harfoush
External Reviewers:	Candice Chow, McMaster University Wendy Schulz, Infinite Futures

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE MDES STRATEGIC FORESIGHT & INNOVATION CYCLICAL PROGRAM REVIEW

The IQAP Cyclical Review for SFI began in September 2023 and continued to June 2024 for the Self-Study. The process was led by Graduate Program Director Suzanne Stein until Winter 2025, with a program review team consisting of Michele Mastroeni and Nabil Harfoush. The Self Study included extensive consultation with students, faculty and support units from across the university. The Self-Study Brief was submitted on March 11, 2025, finalized by acting GPD Michele Mastroeni.

The External Review site visit took place on April 8-9, 2025 and the External Report was submitted on July 31, 2025. The External Reviewers were Dr. Candice Chow, McMaster University, and Dr. Wendy Schultz of Infinite Futures. The internal reviewer was Angelika Seeschaaf-Veres. The internal responses to the External Reviewer Report were submitted September 23, 2025.

Overall, the reviewers noted the program's strengths as being able to meet student needs and expectations, with quality faculty and a diverse cohort to enrich the learning experience.

The program will work to enact the following recommendations: expand elective offerings in a way that both builds upon faculty knowledge/skills but also that of broader

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community members; create an internal quality review measures and metrics to maintain the program at the cutting edge; review online teaching practices as part of early quality improvement; map the course content across the curriculum and update and improve the skills offerings in the program; and formalize structures for community networks including strengthening the alumni network.

Monitoring reports on these recommendations will be submitted in spring 2027 and 2029. The next Cyclical Program Review for SFI is scheduled to begin in fall 2030.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Recommendation	Proposed Follow-up	Responsibility for Leading Follow-up, and Other Stakeholders	Timeline for Addressing Recommendation
<p>1. Rebuild and stabilize core faculty</p> <p>Hire new teaching intensive continuing faculty; reduce reliance on sessionals (reduce to increase the faculty to sessional ratio).</p> <p>More specifically, have these faculty members focus on the MDes program (versus undergraduate programs).</p>	<p>The program committee itself will not be able to pursue this recommendation outside of continuing to call for the hiring of more faculty members.</p>	<p>Graduate Program Director with Dean, Graduate Studies</p> <p>Deans from undergraduate faculties</p>	<p>At the beginning of each Winter term, before the end of fiscal year, the GPD will consult with the Dean of Graduate Studies on hiring possibilities across contract types. They will also consult with the undergraduate Faculty Deans to see what possibilities exist.</p> <p>Beginning February 2026</p>
<p>2. Create guest faculty program</p> <p>Set up a 'special topics' elective course code for one-</p>	<p>A new elective "shell" course will be created, and planning and awareness building will begin the next</p>	<p>Graduate Program Director, in</p>	<p>In Winter of 2027 the Registrar's office will be</p>

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<p>semester visiting faculty to offer unique methods or topics seminars online.</p>	<p>academic year to identify and reach out to potential instructors.</p> <p>Once launched, and dependent on take-up, renewal of the elective course will be bi-annual</p>	<p>consultation with other SFI faculty and Graduate Office</p>	<p>consulted regarding the feasibility of holding a shell course, or what other form such as changeable elective would have to take.</p> <p>Planning for the new course will be in July 2027 with the shell course to be created and approved by the Fall term of 2028.</p> <p>An instructor for the course will be invited by April of 2028 for launch in September 2028.</p> <p>This year-long delay will allow for other major course changes being planned to take effect, and then allow for better planning of topic and timing for the elective course.</p>
<p>3. Restore MRP supervision structure</p> <p>Reinstate secondary advisors and formal presentation / defenses; compensate faculty, to maintain academic rigour</p>	<p>Given new developments with the faculty MOA, the current financial constraints, and the policy that differentiates MRPs from Thesis, we are looking to at the possibility of implementing a hybrid of this recommendation: rather than secondary advisors, we would seek a secondary “reader” - a faculty member or community member who</p>	<p>Graduate Program Director, faculty members, with support of SGS staff</p>	<p>Presentations will begin in April/May of 2027 as an expansion of the Innovation Forum for the graduate programs. These will not be defences due to the policy differentiating theses from MRPs.</p>

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	would engage with the work in the second term of the MRP for quality control and to offer some feedback, though not to act as an advisor. This would provide the quality control and ensure a second set of eyes on the work while adhering to the resourcing constraints and MOA constraints. Student presentations, though not defences, will be used as a way to showcase projects.		For students entering in Fall 2027, we will re-introduce a secondary reader for feedback and quality control in MRPs.
4. Reinstate Graduate Program Coordinator	The program committee will not pursue this as it is out of its purview.	n/a	n/a
5. Re-evaluate and redesign part-time, online program Redesign of the part-time, online program, possibly towards hybrid learning to promote team-based and project-based learning. Encourage in-person interaction through a residency model and the use of physical spaces (such as lab and studio spaces). Define success measures unique to part-time, online programs.	The GPD will explore the rules, regulations and visa requirements for a 'hybrid' or low residency model. The program committee will explore possible success measures for the program (see also recommendation 12)	GPD, program committee	The GPD will have explored the option for low residency visas and any regulations/rules for September of 2027. This will allow time for program changes (i.e. Major Modification proposal) for Fall 2027 and approvals, with possible implementation by Fall 2028. The one year delay will also allow for other more urgent program changes planned to have been rolled out.
6. Redesign online teaching practices Assess current SFI online course design against best practice in digital course	Research to be carried out by a Research Assistant under supervision of the GPD. CLT to be consulted	GPD and Research Assistant; CLT	Initial discussion around online learning – lessons learned from Fall 2025 – will be held in February of

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<p>design – start by reviewing existing foresight, innovation, or design programs offering online courses, and reference as well best practice in online meetings and trainings. Apply insights to redesigning SFI’s online course offerings.</p>			<p>Winter 2027 amongst faculty.</p> <p>An RA will be hired and assigned to compare different approaches and good practices of online learning in September 2027 with completion and reporting expected in December 2027. At the same time the GPD will work with CLT for their advice on best practices.</p>
<p>7. Inventory and map concepts and skills content across curriculum</p> <p>Organize a half day’s soft systems mapping session with faculty and students to create a visual map of the interconnections between concepts, methods, and activities / assignments across all the SFI course offerings.</p>	<p>SFI faculty will be selected to lead a workshop (synchronous or asynchronous) to create a system map with faculty and student input, as well as sessional instructor input.</p>	<p>Selected SFI faculty members</p>	<p>This mapping exercise will begin in April of 2027 in anticipation of the major changes occurring in the program for September 2027. This will allow for better development of course content for Fall 2027</p>
<p>8. Enhance curriculum with emerging skills</p> <p>Add AI, data visualization, storytelling, facilitation, and quantitative methods.</p>	<p>The GPD and core faculty will explore where the material might fit within existing courses, and also consider standalone electives or non-credit workshops.</p>	<p>GPD and full time faculty</p>	<p>April 2026 – faculty will be asked to identify where some of these topics may fit in existing courses. October 2026 a workshop on one of these topics will be held, with a second in February of 2027. April/May 2028 a possible elective will be discussed and planned to</p>

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			coincide with recommendation 2 and 7.
<p>9. Rebuild Web presence and marketing</p> <p>Launch updated website and social media strategy.</p>	Not an item of direct action for the program committee members.	GPD in consultation with Marketing & Communication and other GPDs	Ongoing; To be determined in consultation with M&C
<p>10. Leverage alumni network</p> <p>Leverage alumni network to expand industry connections, drive program referrals, and build a strong community of practice.</p>	GPD and core faculty will continue to conduct outreach with alumni, including building a database of organizational contacts/stakeholders. Industry and community events will be held annually to maintain these connections.	GPD and core faculty	Database has begun in October 2026. Update will continue and be complete by March 2026. First community event to be held in May 2026 in conjunction with Innovation Forum.
<p>11. Improve advising and career support</p> <p>Launch mentorship program; expand and monitor CEAD placements.</p>	The program committee will assign individuals to follow up with alumni representatives to re-start an alumni network, a possible mentorship program, and how to funnel alumni-sourced internships to CEAD.	Program committee sub-committee	May 2026 subcommittee will be selected and tasked to act on restarting alumni network following community event. They will also be asked to liaise with the CEAD and note how opportunities could best be carried through them. By September 2026 a small number of alumni (2-3) will be asked to act as alumni representatives and help formally re-start an alumni network. By September 2027 a mentorship program will be piloted with incoming OR with

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			<p>students entering MRP phase. May 2028 a formal pipeline for internships will begin to be developed by faculty and alumni representatives.</p>
<p>12. Establish quality monitoring system</p> <p>Use peer/self-evaluations, analytics, and alumni surveys. Create data-driven analytical platforms to store and analysis feedback, quantitatively and qualitatively.</p> <p>Identify KPIs that link program quality with impact.</p>	<p>Program committee to develop KPIs and metrics. Resourcing for an RA or administrative staff member to taken on database maintenance. and upkeep will be explored.</p> <p>Cyclical timing of reviews to be determined by program committee based on available resourcing.</p>	<p>GPD and program committee. A Research Assistant or staff member if funding available.</p>	<p>April/May 2028 the program committee will be tasked with developing metrics and KPIs based on the new program structure following major changes implemented in Fall term of 2027.</p> <p>Summer of 2028 GPD will determine resource availability for staff or RA support. First review can begin April/May 2029.</p>