

# **Academic Plan**

**Creative Connections. Connected Creatives.**

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## Land Acknowledgement

AUArts rests on the traditional Treaty 7 territories of the Blackfoot people and in the spirit of our efforts to promote reconciliation, we acknowledge the traditional territories and oral practices of the Blackfoot Confederacy (Siksika, Piikani and Kainai), the Tsuut'ina (Sarcee), the Stoney Nakoda First Nations (Bears paw, Chiniki and Wesley), the Metis Nation (Region 3) and all those who make their homes in the Treaty 7 region of Southern Alberta.

## Executive Summary

### **Creative Connections. Connected Creatives.**

This plan emphasizes connections: in planning, in curriculum, in internal collaborations, in external partnerships, in inclusivity in our community. It recognizes that when we connect with one another and with the world beyond our walls, we are all stronger for it.

AUArts is privileged to play a life-changing role in connecting students to one another and the world of art, craft and design, to leading faculty, to transformative ideas, and to their exciting future. We have a proud record of alumni who have entered exciting and meaningful careers not just as professional artists, craftspeople, designers, entrepreneurs and employers, but in diverse fields that rely upon the skills we develop, skills the Conference Board of Canada has identified as essential for employability in Alberta: critical thinking and communication, leadership, innovation, and readiness for the future economy. All AUArts graduates emerge from their program of study changed and ready to succeed, not only in Alberta's labour market, but throughout their lives. This plan is our promise to strengthen our ability to develop these skills in the students we serve, so that we might continue to enrich Alberta's culture through our activities, and its workforce through our versatile, talented alumni.

Approaching its centennial, AUArts finds itself at an exciting moment in its history, as it launches its first Academic Plan as Alberta University of the Arts. While its designation may be new, AUArts—the only dedicated art, craft and design university in the prairie provinces—has an extensive and proud history upon which to build, one that has seen it develop into the institution that it is today: where students learn by doing, in a studio-based classroom grounded in rigorous academics, and develop complementary critical, creative, and practical skills through the exploration of a rich curriculum completely dedicated to art, craft, and design, all in a close-knit and intimate setting where unique students find community.

At its simplest, this plan indicates where we will focus our energies in improving our research, curriculum and relationships as we stake our claim in the Alberta post-secondary ecosystem as a new university. Our programming stands alone, where an enviably broad diversity of art, craft and design disciplines work together for the common single purpose of preparing skilled art, craft and design professionals, entrepreneurs, researchers and practitioners for the creative industries and beyond. Our research is unique and varied but grounded in acts of critical making that create new knowledge. Our relationships, anchor us in Alberta while reaching out to the world, creating connections to enrich our curriculum, demonstrating our attractiveness to prospective students, and enriching our communities.

**Our Mission:** *Alberta University of the Arts is a diverse and inclusive community committed to leading education and research in creative practices.*

**Our Vision:** *To change the world through art, craft and design while enriching creative communities and economies.*

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## Context

This plan lives within the context of the AUArts Strategic Plan goals, its assessment of external trends and factors impacting AUArts' future, and its assessment of institutional Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats and Opportunities.

### Strategic Plan Goals

1. Align programming and curriculum to the evolving needs of students and communities
2. Enable innovation and experimentation through teaching, applied and scholarly research, and creative activities
3. Expand relationships with strategic partners and communities that enrich and improve students' learning outcomes
4. Drive sustainable growth through revenue diversification, an engaging academic environment and a high performance organization.

### Situation Assessment

This plan responds to the elements in the Situation Assessment used to contextualize the strategic plan.

**Political factors** include a provincial government highly focused on jobs, the economy, and institutional financial sustainability.

**Economic** factors include increasing public and private competition in our sector, while the provincial economic outlook remains cautious at best.

**Social** factors include growing demands for adaptability in and accelerated response to a rapidly changing environment, and a growing culture of inclusivity.

**Technological** factors include greater choices and expectations with respect to digital methods of working and curriculum delivery.

**Environmental** factors include greater expectations placed on post secondary institutions to provide student support, especially with respect to mental health and inclusion; and to demonstrate economic and ecological sustainability.

**Educational** factors include increasing demands for accelerated, credentialed learning; flexible, disciplinary porous programming; and growing commitments to inclusive curriculum and practice.

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## Priorities

### **Priority 1: Advance Quality Sustainable Programming that Prepares Students for Life and Work Beyond Graduation**

#### **Strategy 1: Ensure reliable curricular quality and planning**

AUArts will reallocate resources to institute a regular, realistic, comprehensive, and rigorous cycle of program assessment, to Campus Alberta standards, in the service of ensuring program quality, effective administrative structures, planning, sustainability, and attraction and retention of students. Working with campus partners as appropriate, AUArts will also develop and institute additional measures to ensure consistent, quality, inclusive, and efficient curriculum, delivery, monitoring, and scheduling, and to enable evidence-based long-term planning for resourcing, hiring, and further curriculum development.

#### **Measures of Success:**

- Cycle completed and Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC) review successful
- Unit plans generated and integrated with academic plan
- Outcomes for all programs and courses approved by General Faculties Council (GFC)

#### **Strategy 2: Build on program quality assessment and review to develop innovative, in-demand program opportunities**

Building upon current market research that identifies emerging opportunities in the transformation of STEM to STEAM fields, and recognizing that new and existing programming must be demonstrably relevant to prospective students, AUArts will assess market, employer and industry demand; resourcing possibilities in terms of equipment, space, personnel, funds, and reallocation; student attraction and retention benefits; academic administrative structures; curriculum delivery models; opportunities for cross-departmental collaboration, work integrated learning, and other compelling qualities, to take action and reallocate funding toward new and innovative curricular directions, synergies, and possibilities.

#### **Measures of Success:**

- Opportunities for program revision and new programming identified, supported by data, developed through to GFC approval

#### **Strategy 3: Clarify the role of Graduate programming at AUArts**

Working closely with faculty, AUArts will address the sustainability of its current sole graduate program, the MFA in Craft Media, to ensure AUArts' best possible service to students.

#### **Measures of Success:**

- Comprehensive cost-benefit analysis and consequent plan of action fulfilled.

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**Strategy 4: Optimize Strategic Enrollment Management practices throughout AUArts for student success**

Units from throughout the academic enterprise will assess AUArts Strategic Enrollment Management practices and their resourcing in a comprehensive, all-AUArts approach to sustainably supporting student attraction and retention.

**Measures of Success:**

- Reduced student attrition
- Increased quantity, range, and quality of student applications
- Increased transition between degree programming and Continuing Education and Professional Development programming

**Strategy 5: Identify and pursue internationalization priorities**

In response to government priorities, AUArts will evaluate and pursue realistic internationalization opportunities that can support recruitment in degree credit and non-credit areas, diversify curricular content and delivery, and promote cultural and professional exchange.

**Measures of Success:**

- Internationalization priorities identified
- Increased intake and retention of international students
- Increased travel study/exchange opportunities and participation
- Faculty exchanges piloted

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## **Priority 2: Promote Research and Career Skills Development Throughout AUArts**

### **Strategy 1: Maximize university capacity for innovative faculty research and dissemination**

Recognizing the variety of research practices, career stages, and readiness among faculty, AUArts will encourage and promote faculty research development, innovation, experimentation, student inclusion, and dissemination. AUArts will focus its research activity, and attendant partnership opportunities and administrative and reporting needs, through the implementation and monitoring of the scholarly research and creativity plan.

#### **Measures of Success:**

- Research and Creativity plan implemented and monitored
- Increased rate of major research grant application and success

### **Strategy 2: Build Professionalization for the Creative Industries into Curricular and Non-Curricular Activities**

AUArts will prioritize and develop opportunities within its means for student professionalization experience, with particular consideration given to work integrated learning, the promotion of entrepreneurship and innovation, increased emphasis on social justice and social practice in curriculum, and offerings of microcredentials and other credential types.

#### **Measures of Success:**

- Microcredentialing opportunities identified, prioritized, implemented, and reflect demand
- Work integrated learning opportunities identified, agreements struck and piloted

### **Strategy 3: Create and Sustain Professional Development Opportunities**

AUArts will institute a sustainable practice of professional development and orientation activities that promote technical, pedagogical, digital, intercultural, academic leadership, and other twenty-first century competencies. It will explore opportunities that include internal events and learning communities, and external partnerships.

#### **Measures of Success:**

- Identify needs and priorities of professional development opportunities for academic staff
- Increased participation rates in professional development opportunities and evidence of application of associated outcomes
- Implementation of Teaching and Learning Plan

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### **Priority 3: Build Strong Relationships**

#### **Strategy 1: Establish external partnerships to ensure program competitiveness and currency for prospective, current, and graduating students**

AUArts will establish Curriculum Professional Advisory Committees to inform curriculum development with industry expertise. We will also strike and monitor transfer and articulation agreements, gain membership in Universities Canada, explore curriculum partnerships with Alberta PSI's and K-12 Boards, learn from globally recognized innovative programs in art, craft and design, and leverage existing partnerships to bolster student attraction and retention strategies, strengthen curricular quality, and pursue professionalization opportunities for students.

##### **Measures of Success:**

- Curriculum Professional Advisory Committees struck, active, and influential in curricular decision making
- Program partnership possibilities mapped, assessed
- Increased rates of transfer to AUArts
- Increased rates of application to AUArts from associated K-12 systems
- Universities Canada membership application successful

#### **Strategy 2: Build internal partnerships to strengthen curriculum, planning, accountability, and governance**

AUArts will create, maintain, and implement unit plans in the service of a developing planning framework to promote innovative cross-departmental collaboration and coordination. In particular, the Luke Lindoe Library, Lodgepole Center, and Illingworth Kerr Gallery will generate strategies to augment curriculum and improve service to students, through, for example, supporting faculty research and student research, professionalization, and experiential learning opportunities.

##### **Measures of Success:**

- Unit plans within the academic enterprise completed, implemented, and monitored
- Unit plans prioritize, implement, and assess collaboration that enriches student experience
- Unit plans situated within integrated planning framework

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## Priority 4: Commit to a Culture of Inclusion and Respect

### Strategy 1: Commit to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada calls to action

AUArts will work closely with internal and external Indigenous communities, and especially the AUArts Elders Council and the Lodgepole Center, to hire Indigenous faculty, and to develop and implement an institutional strategy of inclusivity that extends to training, practices, policies, and meaningful Indigenous curricular content. It will do so in the spirit of the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, the TRC calls to action, and the Universities Canada 13 Principles on Indigenous Education.

#### Measures of Success:

- Hiring and retention of Indigenous faculty and staff
- Increased application and retention of Indigenous students
- AUArts Indigenous Strategy created, implemented, and regularly assessed
- Ongoing thorough and meaningful consultation with Indigenous communities

### Strategy 2: Identify and address ways to augment accessibility to admission, promotion, and opportunities for all community members

AUArts will identify systemic obstacles to student admissions and success, and faculty and staff hiring and promotion, and design and implement a mitigation strategy with clearly articulated outcomes.

#### Measures of Success:

- Strategy with outcomes implemented and monitored

### Strategy 3: Continue to improve a culture of wellbeing, inclusion, and respect

AUArts will plan and offer opportunities that strengthen and make sustainable a culture of respect, civility, diversity, opportunity, and inclusion through such activities as training and the creation of safer spaces. These will include the promotion of mental health awareness, sexual violence prevention, gender and sexuality awareness and inclusion, inclusive pedagogies, intercultural competency, environmental sustainability, and an overall culture of belonging. Meaningful and systemic institutional change, including improving AUArts faculty and staff recruitment, retention and success, will be addressed in an AUArts Equity and Inclusion Action Plan grounded in the Tri-agency Institutional Programs Secretariat (TIPS) Equity, Diversity and Inclusion: A Best Practices Guide for Recruitment, Hiring and Retention and partnership in the Tri-agency Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Action Plan; Universities Canada principles on equity, diversity and inclusion; and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action.

#### Measures of Success:

- Improvement of sexual violence policy and procedure, and of prevention activities
- Increased retention of gender and sexually diverse and BIPOC students, staff and faculty
- Ongoing, thorough and meaningful consultation with gender and sexually diverse and BIPOC communities
- Cycle of sustainable mental health promotion programming implemented
- Cycle of sustainable programs to reduce environmental impact implemented
- Equity and Inclusion Action Plan developed

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## *Process History and Guiding Principles*

In January 2019, the Academic Revitalization Committee established the following as guiding principles as it developed the groundwork for this Academic Plan:

- Student Success
- Consultation and Inclusion
- University Development
- Realistic Sustainability and Risk Assessment

Themes in the initial draft of this plan emerged from documents chronicling past consultations with the community, particularly since 2016. This data was further refined through a series of online polls and open faculty consultation events held between January and June of 2019. The raw data from these polls and consultations was shared with faculty and cabinet in June 2019. The broad priorities emerging from this work were:

- Curriculum Development
- Student Attraction and Retention
- Research Capacity Development

A draft plan reflecting these priorities was shared with the AUArts community in August 2019, followed by individual consultation with sixteen university business units, including the five Schools, between September and October. This plan is a result of that consultation, and aligns with the AUArts Strategic Plan.

## *Conclusion*

Strategic and Academic plans speak primarily to what a university intends to do, and why. The question of how comes through in unit plans. As for when initiatives are to be undertaken, and by whom, consult the 2020-25 Academic Plan timeline and the 2020-25 Academic Plan implementation dashboard documents.

Additionally, the 2020-25 Academic Plan Alignment Chart illustrates which strategies, in the Plan, respond to which elements of the Strategic Plan, its SWOT (Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats) analysis, and its Situation Assessment, characterized by a STEEEP (Social, Technological, Environmental, Educational, Economic, and Political external factors) analysis.

This plan charts a course for AUArts that prioritizes closer integration, both internally between areas, and externally with prospective students, and the academic, political, social, global, research, quality assurance, and economic communities and organizations to which it must be responsive. The responsiveness this plan calls for must also be demonstrated in its own management, meaning that its success will depend upon its monitoring, application of realistic timelines, alignment upward with the Strategic Plan and downward to unit plans, and adaptability to changing circumstances. In other words, this is only the beginning.

Formerly Alberta College of Art and Design (ACAD)  
1407 14 Avenue NW, Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2N 4R3 [AUArts.ca](http://AUArts.ca)

[f](#) [t](#) [@](#) [in](#) @AlbertaUArts