

University of Windsor Scholarship at UWindsor

Research Result Summaries

2019

Digital Journalism Student Experience Survey

Patti A. Timmons Fritz

University of Windsor, pfritz@uwindsor.ca

Grace Howes

University of Windsor, howesg@uwindsor.ca

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/research-result-summaries>
Consistent with the TCPS 2 (4.7) this is a research summary provided to participants and should not be considered a formal publication of results.

Recommended Citation

Timmons Fritz, P. A., & Howes, G. (2019). Digital Journalism Student Experience Survey. Retrieved from <https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/research-result-summaries/73>

This Completed Summary is brought to you for free and open access by Scholarship at UWindsor. It has been accepted for inclusion in Research Result Summaries by an authorized administrator of Scholarship at UWindsor. For more information, please contact scholarship@uwindsor.ca.

Digital Journalism Student Experience Data Analysis

14 current students participated in the Digital Journalism Student Experience Survey. The following table reflects the participation based on year of study:

Answer	Count
Year 1	6
Year 2	0
Year 3	5
Year 4	2
Year 5+	1
Total	14

Attending the Program

Eleven of 14 participants reported they first learned about the Digital Journalism program through personal research. Two participants were introduced to the program at the Ontario Universities' Fair. One participant learned about the program through a campus open house. A majority of participants claimed they were attracted to the program for the practical experience component and the co-major opportunity. Two participants were attracted by the small class size.

Current Perspective of the Program

Program elements to keep. The following were elements of the program that participants indicated they would like to remain unchanged: classes that allow a variety of hands-on, practical experience, small class sizes, and faculty with current journalism experience.

"We have a lot of hands on work, learning aspects in written, radio and video news. The A/V and documentary courses were the most beneficial."

"The majority of the Digital Journalism professors are well-versed and experienced journalists working professionally today. "

"The ability to take a co-major and gain practical experience should definitely stay the same, if not be improved upon. There needs to be more opportunities to gain experience in journalism at the school, especially hands-on reporting and broadcasting skills."

Program elements to change. Common themes of elements that participants indicated they would like to see changed in the program include the organization of equipment, faculty that are enthusiastic and educated on equipment use, and a greater sense of community in the program.

“Courses should be taught by professors who know the material including hands-on like switch board, camera equipment, and editing software knowledge. Practicum courses should be taught by professors with camera equipment, editing software, and previous journalism experience. It's hard to take instructions when students can't ask the professor any questions and they don't have any journalism experience.”

“There is no one in charge of the equipment in terms of keeping track of who's renting it out, making schedules etc. There should be someone who's paid to do that whether that's a job position like a TA or something. Students want to know where to rent out their equipment to complete their assignments and this fosters communication, accountability, and community.”

“There should be more emphasis on the DJ club. Students did run it in the previous years but it wasn't given enough attention. DJ club voting should be encouraged so DJ students care about the program, host events, and eventually want to recruit people into the program.”

Benefits as a Co-Major Program

Three participants identified the growth of their writing and/or communications skills as a result of the program. Six participants enjoyed the co-major opportunity because similar majors help students build their skills and transfer knowledge between classes, allowing for a more well-rounded skill set.

“Journalism has taught me a lot of about storytelling and the rules of traditional journalism. The program has truly improved my communication skills and has allowed me to network with working professionals, opening doors for future job opportunities in the industry. However, I believe that this program could be reduced to a 2-year major or a minor and still carry the same impact it has as a co-major.”

“Learning about journalistic writing, practical experience, improving writing as a whole, learning about how the media works.”

Drawbacks as a Co-Major Program

Three participants described a co-major program to be hectic and difficulties with balancing the workload between both majors. One student experienced a conflict in acquiring all the required classes. Participants agreed that they would like to see more options for co-majoring and electives.

“A semester is not balanced very well; there's always more courses from one major than the other.”

“There were only three options of co-major. And my degree audit was complicated to understand, felt disorganized with the co-major.”

“Limited opportunities for elective classes.”

How attractive would a minor in Digital Journalism be?

Participants were equally interested and disinterested in the Digital Journalism program as a minor.

Answer	%	Count
Very attractive	28.57%	4
Somewhat attractive	21.43%	3
A little attractive	14.29%	2
Not very attractive	14.29%	2
Not attractive at all	21.43%	3
Total	100%	14

Students indicated they would be interested in the Digital Journalism program as a minor because they are interested in learning journalism skills and would undergo the minor if it was the only journalism option. However, participants generally preferred the program as a co-major. One student suggested that a minor would reduce the number of non-essential required courses.

“The program as it is now contains many courses, some that run two semesters for no reason, that I have not found any use for in my career as a student-journalist. As a minor, the program could implement 6 of the core courses that truly impact students and would be just as beneficial.”

“Because it would allow me to study something I have interest and experience in while gaining additional knowledge and experience for what I would prefer to do as a major.”

Participants that indicated they would not be attracted to the Digital Journalism program as a minor indicated that a minor is not a sufficient employable credential. Additionally, participants feared an inferior education with a journalism minor due to the vast amount of content that needs to be covered for a strong skill set.

“There are too many aspects of digital journalism and a minor would not allow enough courses to learn the various necessary skills.”

“No one will hire someone as a journalist with a minor in journalism. It doesn't make sense.”

How attractive would a certificate in Digital Journalism be?

Participants were equally interested and disinterested in the Digital Journalism program as a certificate, as tallied by the quantitative data.

Answer	%	Count
Very attractive	35.71%	5

Somewhat attractive	14.29%	2
A little attractive	7.14%	1
Not very attractive	14.29%	2
Not attractive at all	28.57%	4
Total	100%	14

Even participants who indicated they would be attracted to a certificate program in any capacity say they would not like a Digital Journalism certificate program. However, qualitative data suggested that students would be attracted to the certificate option because they fear the ability to acquire a co-major degree will be retracted.

“It will be good since there is no major anymore digital journalism as a certificate is better than nothing.”

“Digital journalism should be a degree and not a certificate.”

“Personally, being a journalist is one of the most important jobs one can have in today's day and age, so having a certificate is vital if you want to do any kind of reporting or broadcasting be it via TV, radio, the Internet, etc.”

The majority of participants who indicated that they were not attracted to Digital Journalism as a certificate program identify that college would be a more financial and time efficient means of acquiring an equivalent education. One student indicated that a certificate does not appeal to employers.

“Might as well go to college. It will be cheaper & you're getting the same thing.”

“To most people unfortunately, they prefer to see "degree" rather than "certificate" if they want to consider a future employee in the field on the national level in 2018.”

Of the courses you have taken, which of the following do you feel are essential?

Courses in which 80% or more of the eligible participants felt that the courses were essential courses are highlighted in green on the table below. Generally, early year classes (1st and 2nd year) were ranked higher as essential classes in comparison to later year classes (3rd and 4th year).

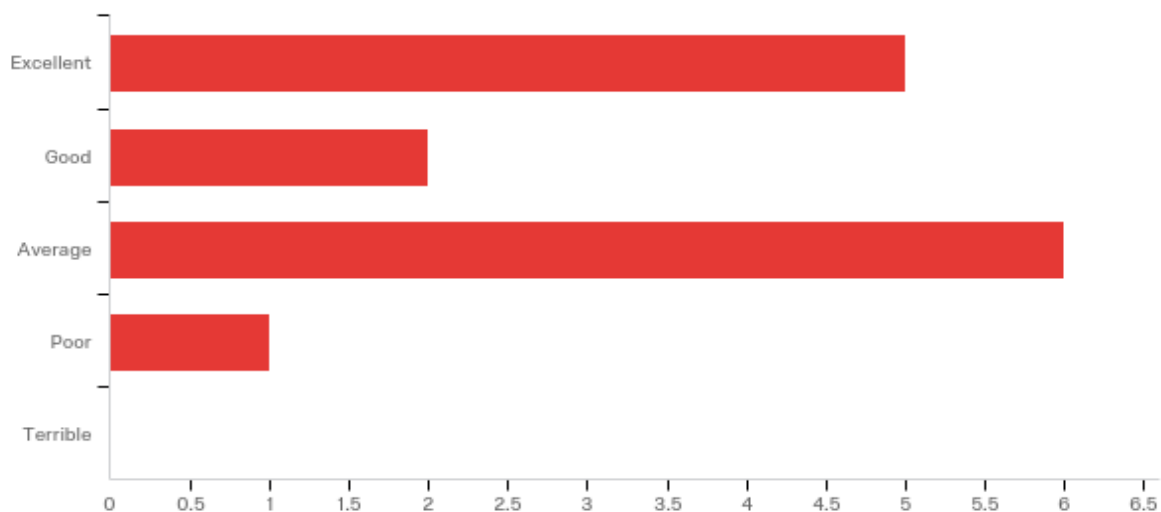
Note: Based on the total responses for each course, some students have provided feedback about classes they have not yet taken.

#	Question	Essential		Nonessential		Total
1	30-120 Reporting Fundamentals	100.00%	14	0.00%	0	14
2	30-125 Journalism Today	76.92%	10	23.08%	3	13

3	30-140 Studio I	92.86%	13	7.14%	1	14
4	30-225 Media Law and Ethics	85.71%	12	14.29%	2	14
5	30-220 Online Design/Publishing	84.62%	11	15.38%	2	13
6	30-222 Audio/Visual Production	84.62%	11	15.38%	2	13
7	30-230 Writing for Digital Journalism	61.54%	8	38.46%	5	13
8	30-240 Studio II	100.00%	13	0.00%	0	13
9	30-320 Computer-Assisted Reporting	83.33%	10	16.67%	2	12
10	30-340 Studio III - Semester 1	66.67%	8	33.33%	4	12
11	30-340 Studio III - Semester 2	63.64%	7	36.36%	4	11
12	30-430 Practicum	72.73%	8	27.27%	3	11
13	30-440 Studio IV	81.82%	9	18.18%	2	11

In terms of the order of courses, how well do you feel the progression of your Digital Journalism courses supported your learning in the following years?

Quantitative data indicated that participants were generally satisfied with the order of their Digital Journalism courses.



Qualitative data indicated that participants felt that their early year courses set a foundation of theory and writing skills for their later year classes. One student wished that A/V was offered in the first year to offer a foundation of practical skills before the start of their studio classes. The majority of students were satisfied with the order of their courses.

“The courses teach basic fundamentals core to the subject and practice of journalism that carry on throughout the program, with later classes continuing with those practices but asking more of the students at a logical rate.”

“I would have liked the A/V course available in first year. I did not feel prepared for studio 1 having no video/audio skills at the time. The documentary course was an excellent group project making me more comfortable to do my own work in later years. The studio 4 is an excellent ending to display all learned skills.”

The participant who indicated that they were dissatisfied with the order of Digital Journalism identified a lack of new content in later year course.

“Earlier-year courses (first and second year) provided more substantive education than following years (likely due to administrative difficulties regarding the program).”

How likely are you to continue with the program next year?

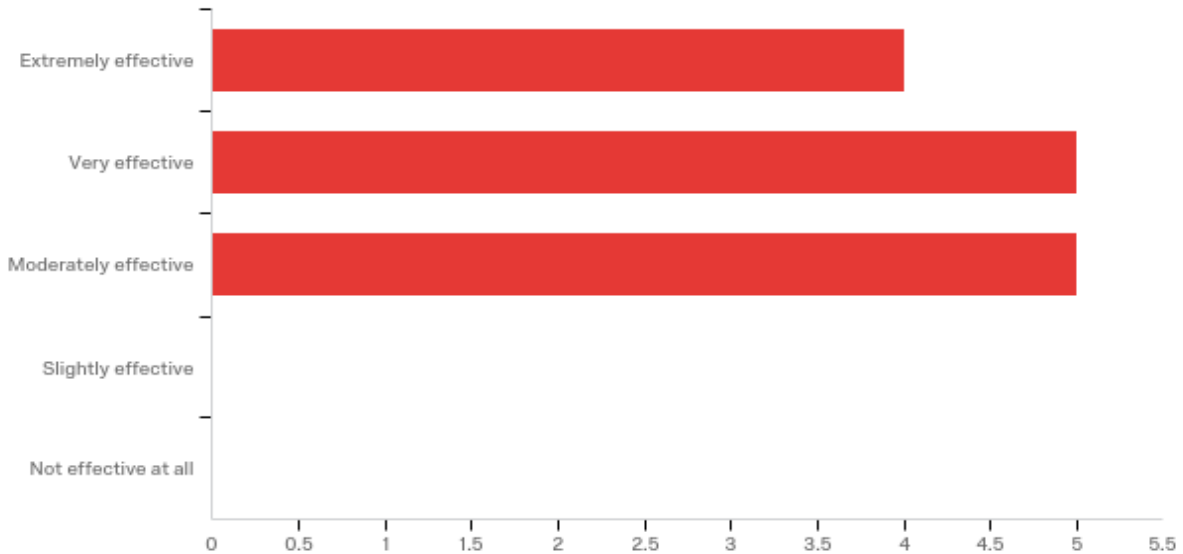
The participants who reported they were unlikely to return next year indicated that it was due to graduation.

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Extremely likely	64.29%	9
2	Moderately likely	7.14%	1
3	Slightly likely	0.00%	0
4	Neither likely nor unlikely	14.29%	2
5	Slightly unlikely	0.00%	0
6	Moderately unlikely	7.14%	1
7	Extremely unlikely	7.14%	1
	Total	100%	14

Qualitative responses for participants who indicated they were unlikely to return to the program identified difficulty with changing co-majors may influence students to leave both programs to pursue a new major entirely. Additionally, one participant referenced back to a previous response of theirs where they suggested St. Clair College offers equivalent education.

How effective is the teaching within the Digital Journalism program?

In the quantitative data, participants indicated that they were generally satisfied with the effectiveness of the teaching in the Digital Journalism program.



Participants indicated that some changes to teaching in the program that they would like to see included more professors with knowledge of digital equipment and awareness of changes in the journalism industry. Participants want to work with professors who currently work in the journalism industry, as well as faculty that demonstrate enthusiasm for teaching, students, and the Digital Journalism program.

“The program desperately needs someone who thoroughly knows camera equipment (the ones students will be taught with and use to rent out for assignments), editing software (the ones students will be encouraged to use), switch board in Studio B (students will need to use this room in 2nd and 3rd year), and journalism experience.”

“We need to hire reporters with the skills of journalism in today’s world. Many professors did not have the digital skills to teach.”

“Some profs don't care and seem to want to be a part of the program just to have a position of power.”

The majority of participants have indicated that their interactions with Digital Journalism faculty have been pleasant, with the exception of one participant:

“Faculty and Staff don't care about any problems until they absolutely have to. Faculty and Staff only work in the program because it's easy money for them, and it shows. Staff is unwilling to help and faculty never has office hours. (Rich Garton is an exception to all comments).”

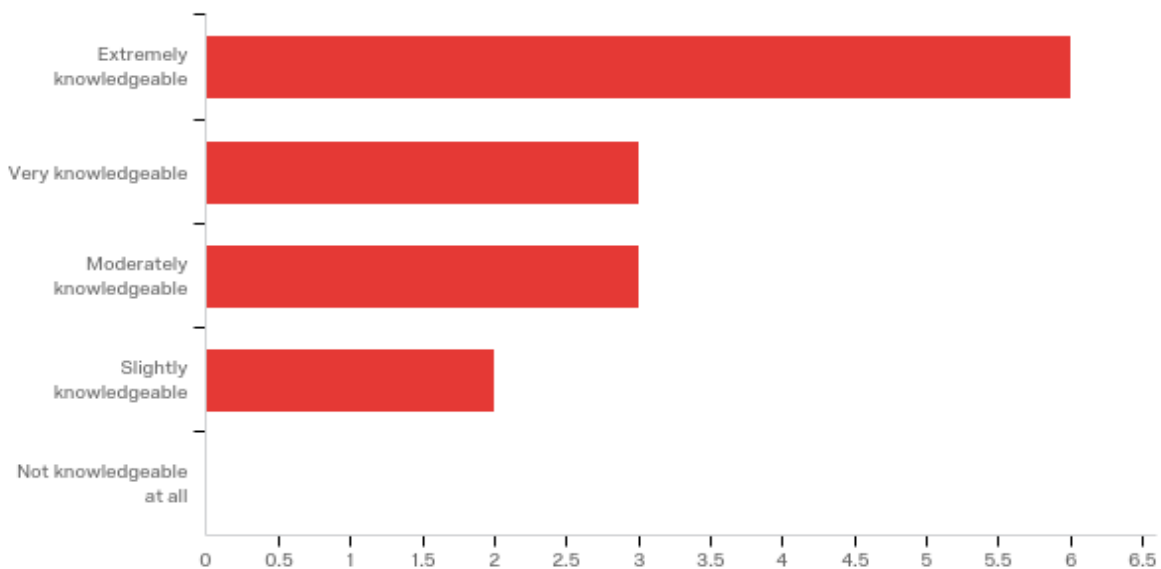
How reasonable or unreasonable are the instructors’ expectations of you for this program?

The majority of participants felt that Digital Journalism instructors have reasonable expectations for students.

Answer	%	Count
Extremely reasonable	14.29%	2
Moderately reasonable	42.86%	6
Slightly reasonable	35.71%	5
Neither reasonable nor unreasonable	0.00%	0
Slightly unreasonable	0.00%	0
Moderately unreasonable	7.14%	1
Extremely unreasonable	0.00%	0
Total	100%	14

How knowledgeable are your instructors about the material presented in this program?

The majority of participants reported that Digital Journalism instructors are knowledgeable about the material presented in the program.



How effective are your professors in teaching practical skills in the program?

The majority of participants indicated that professors are moderately effective or better in teaching theoretical skills. However, 5 participants felt the teaching of practical skills was only slightly or not at all effective.

Answer	%	Count
Extremely effective	28.57%	4
Very effective	14.29%	2
Moderately effective	21.43%	3
Slightly effective	21.43%	3
Not effective at all	14.29%	2
Total	100%	14

How effective are your professors in teaching theoretical information in the program?

Answer	%	Count
Extremely effective	21.43%	3
Very effective	57.14%	8
Moderately effective	14.29%	2
Slightly effective	7.14%	1
Not effective at all	0.00%	0
Total	100%	14

The majority of participants indicated that professors are moderately effective or better in teaching theoretical skills. Additionally, participants indicated that Digital Journalism faculty are more effective at teaching theoretical skills as opposed to practical skills.

**What types of profession are you interested in pursuing after achieving your undergraduate degree?
Select all that apply.**

Answer	%	Count
Journalism	26.67%	8
Public Relations	20.00%	6
Politics	6.67%	2

Publishing	6.67%	2
Web Design	6.67%	2
Continued Education	13.33%	4
Videography	10.00%	3
Other	10.00%	3
Total	100%	30

Other answers included documentary filmmaking, marketing, and broadcasting. The majority of participants indicated they are interested in pursuing a career in a related field to digital journalism.

How well do you feel the Digital Journalism program has prepared you for a job in a related field?

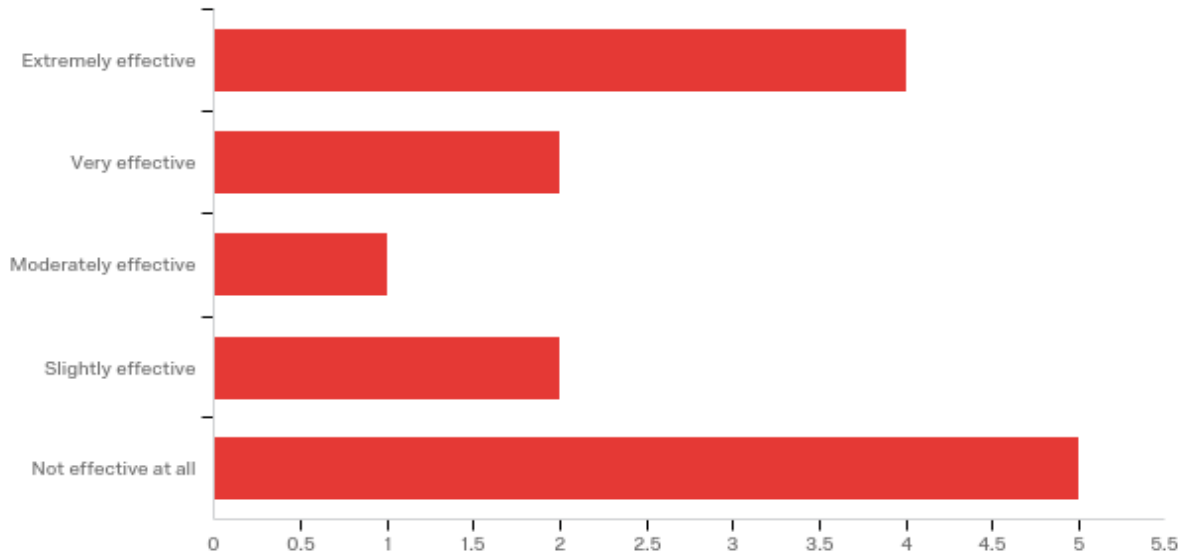
Answer	%	Count
Very well	35.71%	5
Well	21.43%	3
Slightly well	21.43%	3
Neither well nor unwell	7.14%	1
Slightly unwell	7.14%	1
Unwell	0.00%	0
Not well at all	7.14%	1
Total	100%	14

Approximately half of participants indicated that they felt the Digital Journalism program has prepared them well or very well for a job in a related field. A participant who indicated they do not feel well prepared wanted more experience in broadcast journalism.

“Classes for broadcast journalism, including for improving on-camera performance (not acting, but in terms of personality, etc.), managing a newscast on a tight deadline, etc. There also needs to be longer-style classes which can give students a day a week to simulate what a real newsroom would be like (similar to St. Clair College, but with stricter deadlines, policies, etc.) for all types of journalism.”

How effectively have your professors helped you make networks/ connections within the journalism field?

Approximately half of participants indicated that their professors have been only slightly effective or not effective at all. Six participants reported professors have been very effective or extremely effective.



Please rate your overall satisfaction with the Digital Journalism program thus far.

Eight participants, or approximately half of all participants, were moderately to extremely satisfied with their experience in the Digital Journalism program.

