

CAUCE Award Submission

UBC Certificate in Entertainment Administration

Abstract

Behind every great film, television show or entertainment piece, there's a solid team of professionals. Despite the challenging economy, the British Columbia entertainment industry continues to be a strong leader in meeting the challenges and demands of today's' evolving new media and entertainment industry. It offers opportunities for those with the right talent, leadership and knowledge to produce and manage the creative content for both edutainment and entertainment project endeavors throughout Canada and internationally.

The **UBC Certificate in Entertainment Administration** was developed in 2003, in response to a need for highly trained entertainment specialists who have an interest and desire to work in business management for the film and television industries. Today, this one-of-a-kind program has expanded to embrace the new media sector of the entertainment industry.

The program is offered in both a full-time and part-time format. The full-time program encompasses 300 course hours and is delivered over 13 weeks. The part-time program offers 240 course hours and allows participants up to two years to complete the program, taking courses at their own pace. Both versions of the program include ten courses, and the full-time version offers an additional two-week internship and entertainment career workshops.

Upon completing the program, individuals are qualified to work as producers, production coordinators or managers, or as managers in the areas of marketing, distribution and sales, business development, financing and funding or legal affairs.

A key to the program's success has been its **strong industry connection** and the resulting relationships graduates develop with fellow professionals and organizations. While taking the program, students have many opportunities to network with and hear guest presentations by key industry leaders and producers. Input from the industry is an integral part of the program curriculum that provides a hands-on perspective on how decisions are made and implemented.

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UBC Certificate in Entertainment Administration

Program Description

Overview

The UBC Certificate in Entertainment Administration is one-of-a-kind program that provides professional development and **business skills** for those in the **new media** and **entertainment** industry. The program targets two complimentary streams of professionals – those with existing business and management skills looking to transition their knowledge to the entertainment industry, and those with entertainment industry experience looking to add business and management expertise to their skill set.

"I was intrigued by the program because it was developed for people who are successful in one industry and want to transfer their skills, experience and enthusiasm to another industry."

Maureen MacDonald, program graduate and Director, Administration and Member Services, Union of BC Performers/ACTRA

The certificate is designed to teach the essentials of entertainment administration including producing, distributing, marketing and funding of entertainment made in Canada for both a local and international audience. It provides an overview of the industry from a business perspective, focusing on **decision-making** and **leadership skills** for **pitching, budgeting** and **producing**.

"The UBC Certificate in Entertainment Administration program helped me to more clearly define my niche, which helped me set my career goals. By the end of the program I was able to distill my skills, experience, and everything that I learned into a few sentences that I could use to market and brand myself."

Christine Larsen, program graduate and Business Analyst, BC Film

"For me, the professional skills development course really brought it all together. The instructor Tom Locke really helped me to go deep into myself to see who I was, my skills and why I wanted to work in this industry. I felt this course helped me define and refine my goals and inspired me to pursue them."

Aza O'Leary, program graduate and Associate Producer, Chronos Productions

The program is delivered in **both a full-time format and a part-time format** to meet the needs to various learners. Students of both the full-time and part-time format are integrated into the same program and series of courses that cover topics such as treaties and co-productions, new media platforms, pitching and presentation skills, script and budget breakdown, production management, post-production, financing and the Canadian funding system, entertainment law, and entertainment marketing and distribution.

The curriculum integrates each course in such a way as to provide a clear and strategic overview of the business side of the entertainment industry, including the key players and decision-making process. Program objectives are achieved through individual and group projects where team collaboration is key to success.

The **full-time** certificate program (approximately 300 course hours, 20 hrs/week minimum, evenings and weekends) is delivered over 13 weeks, which **includes a two-week internship** or project and **workshops in "Building your Entertainment Career."** Full-time students may be eligible for student loan funding.

The **part-time** certificate program (240 course hours, evenings and weekends) allows participants to choose the order in which they complete their courses and the pace at which they work towards completing the program requirements. **Part-time students are given up to two years to complete the ten required courses in this certificate.** The part-time format does not include an internship or workshops on "Building Your Entertainment Career;" however, students enjoy the same networking and presentations from industry guest speakers.

Innovation in Delivery

A **unique feature** of the full-time program is the opportunity for students to participate in **industry internships**. Internship is unpaid and approximately two weeks in length. Internship offers students the opportunity to experience the day-to-day work environment of the entertainment industry as well as build a **network of contacts**.

"I was extremely interested in the internship and guest speaker aspects of the program because these provide a real opportunity to create relationships with some of the top companies and individuals in the entertainment industry in Canada."

James Upton, program graduate and Producer and Co-founder, Talelight Films

Sponsoring internship companies and organizations also benefit from the internship program as it gives them the opportunity to assess **qualified professionals** for positions and projects that are in development or production. Through internship, companies can get assistance in the following: funding applications; screening of script proposals for their entertainment value; script budget breakdowns; marketing plans; event-planning; legal contracts and distribution agreements; and in gaining different perspectives in conceptual and business problems that determine the success of a film, TV or new media project. It is a **win-win relationship** whereby both sponsor and student can collaborate on the business and producing level of a production.

In addition, companies and organizations send their business leaders and managers to the program **to upgrade their professional development skills** and to network with potential future creators and producers.

"The RBC Film and Entertainment team is proud to support the UBC Certificate in Entertainment Administration program. We've seen first hand how the program curriculum has assisted two of our Film Finance employees who are alumni. The knowledge and industry insight they gained from the course instructors and guest speakers enabled them to quickly enhance their skills and expertise to better serve our clients. A further testament to the value of the program is the large number of former students who I often see working at our clients' film companies."

John Genzel, Manager, Media & Entertainment, Royal Bank of Canada

Many sponsoring organizations have **hired graduates** from the UBC Certificate in Entertainment Administration program. **Companies that support our internship program include:** BC Film, Academy of Canadian Cinema & Television, Women in Film and Television, National Film Board of Canada, CBC, CTV, Insight Films, Brightlight Studios, Omni Film Productions, Keatley Entertainment Ltd., Paperny Films, Chronos Productions (documentary, PSA), Studio B Productions (TV animation), Bardel Entertainment (TV animation), Stage3Media (interactive sci-fi on the web), Industry Works Inc. (distribution), Whistler Film Festival and Vancouver International Film Festival...

*"British Columbia Film has had the privilege of being invited to participate as guest speaker and as an internship sponsoring organization to the **UBC Certificate in Entertainment Administration**. As guest speaker over the past 8 semesters I have been impressed with the level of knowledge and enthusiasm by the students. The skills obtained through this program have set up the graduates to be job ready. In fact, British Columbia Film currently has hired four alumni from the program in the*

past and they have all excelled in their roles. British Columbia Film continues to support the UBC Certificate in Entertainment Administration as it provides excellent opportunities for their grads within the BC film industry."

Robert Wong, Vice President, Tax Credits and Development, BC Film

"During its more than 20 years in business, Omni Film has worked with many interns from numerous programs. I'm pleased to say that the interns from the UBC Certificate in Entertainment Administration have been some of the best. The combination of experience and skills they've gained through this program make us eager to work with them. Many times we've been so impressed we've gone on to hire them!"

Heather Hawthorn-Doyle, Omni Life, Executive Producer, Omni Film Productions Inc.

Program Development

The program was developed with input from some **industry-based advisory committee** members. Committee members work as producers, directors, agents, distributors and legal experts in the entertainment industry. The committee takes an active role in the curriculum; ensuring program content reflects **ongoing industry trends and developments**.

The UBC Certificate in Entertainment Administration has evolved since its launch in fall 2003. In response to changing trends and feedback from industry, program content and focus has been updated and revised.

For example, the **Production Management** course has been adjusted to include budget breakdowns for movie of the week (MOW), short feature and documentary as these formats have become more in demand. The **Entertainment Law** course has adjusted its content to include copyright issues relevant to the internet platform. The **Marketing and Distribution** courses have expanded to embrace changes in digital platforms, box office sustainability, festival entry criteria and new demographic targets. The **Film & Television Financing** course has been revised to integrate new media funding sources and application criteria into its curriculum.

Complexity

Many applied learning programs can be susceptible to **industry fluctuations**, and the UBC Certificate in Entertainment Administration is no exception. The British Columbia film and television industry, also known as Hollywood North, has had times of prosperity and adversity over the last decade as a result of the exchange rate on Canadian dollar and overall market conditions.

The unpredictability of the industry has affected the program and **the need to update curriculum and content continuously**: to reflect the dollar exchange and how it attracts or detracts production, to emphasize tax credits on budget considerations, to introduce production partnerships from an independent producer perspective, to bring in new strategy to address new funding procedures, and to build confidence by building leadership and professional skills that win opportunities.

Another complexity facing the program is the **evolving technology and new media** developments that affect how entertainment is delivered to the consumer. Where once films and television programs were delivered in a movie theatre or via TV set, the Internet has transformed not only the delivery method, but also the format, audience and content. This new media evolution has compelled the program to constantly **stay at the forefront** of industry developments. In this respect, the advisory committee plays an important role.

The program also reflects the changing student client base, as students with a stronger focus on new media are also entering the program. The students bring to the table examples of **new challenges** whether it is a need for a new marketing strategy for broadband TV distribution or IP requirements for internet creative. Internship has also reflected program content change. An example is placing intern students with Stage3Media's first TV series made for the internet, "Sanctuary" to work on marketing strategies and monetization business models for the internet.

Program Implementation

Value in Industry Connections

It is vital to the UBC Certificate in Entertainment Administration program that the program administrators and instructors stay connected to the entertainment industry. UBC does not create content that can become obsolete, but rather contracts the instructors who are industry professionals to bring the content into the program. The industry provides leadership and feedback on current trends and developments, failures and successes.

Instructors/Guest Speakers

All instructors in the program are industry professionals with an average of 10 – 25 years experience in various aspects of the entertainment industry, as well as experience in adult education. The instructors share their cumulative knowledge and real-world experience with students, and provide a valuable resource for students entering the industry.

"The curriculum really impressed me. It's taught by active industry professionals who you really want to know, so having access to them and getting them to know you on a personal basis, which is essential in this industry, is worth it no matter what else you learn in the program."

Maureen MacDonald, program graduate and Director, Administration and Member Services, Union of BC Performers/ACTRA

Each term welcomes returning **industry leaders** from a diverse range of organizations (BC Film, Telefilm Canada, Royal Bank of Canada, Directors Guild of Canada - BC and CFPTA- BC Producers' Branch) to present up-to-date information, policy change, feedback and insights into what the industry is looking for in terms of funding applications, business development and partnerships. Producers and production managers visit to give perspectives on the steps required to produce content and reach market with a sound business model in hand.

"I've had the pleasure of being invited to speak about the film industry to several cohorts in the UBC Entertainment Administration Certificate program, over the past few years. I'm happy to say that I've always found the respective groups well informed, prepared and highly engaged. I think one of the strengths of the program is that students come to it from diverse backgrounds - the majority of them have considerable experience in other industries, and are looking to transition into the film and television business. The students therefore bring an interesting mix of skill sets and experience into the classroom, which in-turn enriches the discussion and experience for all concerned. I've had several students follow-up with me subsequent to my presentation(s), and they invariably come well prepared."

John Dippong, Feature Film Executive, Western Region, Telefilm Canada

Marketing Strategies

The UBC Certificate in Entertainment Administration employs a varied and effective marketing strategy, including **word-of-mouth** promotion, **online marketing** and traditional **advertising**.

The nature of entertainment industry is relationship based, so it follows that the program's biggest marketing asset is **word-of-mouth**. To foster industry networking and recognition of the program, UBC Continuing Studies sponsors various local **film festivals**, **award ceremonies**, **industry forums** and **association workshops**. Program alumni working in the field are also a great source of direct promotion and become program ambassadors when networking within industry. The program recently sponsored an **alumni networking evening**, and plans are afoot by alumni to create a Facebook page to continue networking with their fellow graduates.

Online promotion for the program is done through systematic **email campaigns** to current and prospective students, as well as to industry association membership groups. In addition to encouraging students to sign up for courses, email campaigns are an effective way to build a relationship with the student body and industry, and creates a **sense of affiliation** which is often lacking in continuing education programs.

The **program website** also provides a strong marketing presence for the program. To support this, UBC Continuing Studies has optimized the site's content so that it is easily findable by search engines. The program also makes use of Google Ad Words, which involves paying for the program's website link to appear when a user types program-related search terms into the Google search engine.

Finally, traditional **print advertising** continues to be a solid component of the program's marketing strategy, with periodic ads in daily papers, a weekly entertainment newspaper and selected industry publications.

Program Outcomes

Growth

Since the UBC Certificate in Entertainment Administration was launched, the program **has graduated** approximately **100 full-time certificate students**, and **has welcomed over a hundred** additional **non-certificate students** for individual course enrollment. With the addition of a part-time certificate version of the program in 2006, registrations have increased on average by 50% while at the same time keeping overhead costs at a similar level by integrating part-time and full-time students into the same program structure. Since 2006, the program has demonstrated year over year steady financial growth. As a smaller niche program this demonstrates fiscal success.

From Student to Professional

In addition to a robust local and national student base, the program has **international** appeal with students attending from Nigeria, Turkey, Indonesia, Singapore, the Netherlands, France, Bulgaria, Mexico and the United States. Our international audience and study body finds us through the Internet and/or hears about the program through industry associations.

The program's **focus on the business side of the industry** is unique. Professionals from Canada or from around the world have several options when it comes to programs that specialize in film or TV production, but it is less common to find a comprehensive program and not just a series of workshops, that focuses on the business and management skills required to be a successful producer or entertainment professional.

Program graduates have found employment as associate producers, line producers, and independent producers, production coordinators, production managers, script managers, lifestyle TV writers/content developers, business development officers, marketing coordinators or managers, festival event planners, film tax coordinators, and film association directors.

Enhancing the Profile of Continuing Education

This program fills a need for producers, production managers and business professionals who understand the entertainment industry in British Columbia, specifically within British Columbia, but also across Canada and internationally.

*“The **UBC Certificate in Entertainment Administration** is a unique program that offers professionals from other sectors or those within the film industry, who would like to go in a new direction, an opportunity to transition to the business management side of film and television. With a curriculum that teaches the essentials of entertainment administration from funding and financing through producing, distributing, marketing and entertainment law, students that successfully complete the program are well versed in all aspects of the business of film and television production with a wide variety of career choices open to them.*

**Dianne Scott, Director, Operations & Member Services,
BC Producers' Branch-CFTPA**

The UBC Certificate in Entertainment Administration has **fostered strong ties within the local entertainment industry**, and this relationship is of value to both the University and to the companies and organizations who support the program. Our growing network of accomplished graduates also helps to strengthen the profile of UBC Continuing Studies within the British Columbia entertainment and new media industry.