



Fashion
Faculty of Communication
& Design

To: Dr. Marcia Moshe, Interim Vice-Provost Academic

Cc: Dr. Chris Evans, Interim Provost
Charles Falzon, Dean, Faculty of Communication and Design
Katherine Penny, Director, Curriculum Quality Assurance
Sandra Tullio-Pow, Interim Chair, School of Fashion

From: Robert Ott, Chair, School of Fashion

Date: June 30, 2016

Re: Fashion PPR Follow-up Report

Dear Marcia,

The School of Fashion would like to acknowledge Ryerson Senate's approval of the Periodic Program Review – Fashion in May 2015 and thank the Academic Standards Committee (ASC) for their support and guidance during the process. We are pleased that the ASC assessment of the Periodic Program Review (PPR) of the Bachelor of Design in Fashion indicated that overall the review was well done and provided an informative evaluation of the program. The ASC also noted the ongoing work and development on diversity. We note that the next program review will be in 2022/23.

As requested by the ACS, I am pleased to provide a follow-up report on the status of the initiatives outlined in the Developmental Plan and the Supplemental Plan. Also, the follow-up includes a review of the program learning outcomes, indicating how they differentiate between Fashion Communication and Fashion Design, how the School plans to address outcomes identified within the self study that could be strengthened through curriculum revisions, and how some of the learning outcomes do not meet a level of proficiency.

Status of Initiatives Outlined in Developmental and Supplemental Plans

It is important to note that the Developmental Plan's overarching theme focuses on re-imagining the school's curriculum to address the profound changes occurring in the global fashion industry within the context of industry-based skills and values and emerging theoretical and experiential models that seek to expand students' understanding of fashion as cultural practice. In arriving at

recommending a new curricular structure, we took the following factors as outlined in the Developmental Plan into account: student choice and curricular flexibility, diversity, zone education, technology, faculty recruitment and workload, and student performance. This list is not necessarily exhaustive, however, but meant to address questions that arose from the PPR.

Student Choice and Curricular Flexibility

Choice involves three approaches. First, choosing between or among fashion disciplines; second, choosing within a specific fashion discipline; and third, changing one's choice.

In the first approach, our current program offers two options - Fashion Design (FD) and Fashion Communication (FC) - that requires prospective students to choose from two distinct disciplines at the time of their application. It is difficult for prospective students to fully understand the realm of fashion and the diversity of opportunities offered before they begin their studies. Our new curriculum will propose to defer committing to a decision until later in the first year, once students have had an opportunity to explore the various facets of the fashion industry that are beyond the glitz and glamour that attracted them initially to fashion.

In the second approach, students who have been able to make a well-informed decision in their first year which specific discipline to pursue will look for choice within that discipline. This choice will focus primarily on electives to provide breadth and depth. Our new curriculum will propose greater access to elective across disciplines.

In the third approach, we will address situations when students are changing their mind about which option they have chosen in the first place. Currently, students interested in switching options are limited by availability of space in lab courses and to maintain balance between the options. Students who cannot be accommodated either reluctantly continue their program or decide to drop out.

Curricular flexibility is ultimately driven by the structure of the curriculum, the timing of students having to choose, and the ability to change their decisions. As already discussed above, the proposed new curriculum will encourage informed decision-making by students to ensure they find their right fit.

While choice and flexibility are undoubtedly on one end of the curricular spectrum, limitation and rigidity are on the other end. Resolving the inherent tension between the two sides will need to be balanced with operational requirements, resources, and budget factors. Our new curricular approach aims maximize choice of fashion disciplines, but once a discipline is selected, the choice within that discipline will be limited. We believe by streaming students into a narrower discipline that most closely aligns with their skills and interests, there will be greater student satisfaction.

As fashion covers a broad spectrum of creative practice, business, and scholarship, the current curriculum does not properly address societal need. The curriculum focuses on either the *making* of garments (FD) or the *making* of modes of communications (FC).

While the *making* of artefacts has been, is, and continues to be an important aspect of fashion in general and at Ryerson in specific, it excludes those prospective students who are not interested in *making*, but rather working with makers or in the study of fashion. Our Developmental Plan pointed to a large number of potential applicants who have academic potential and an interest in fashion, but who do not have sewing or illustration skills. The subsequent idea of creating a new degree program (BA in Fashion Studies) and subsequently offering a third option has been further explored by faculty, but ultimately abandoned in favour of focusing on the existing BDes in Fashion and an expansion of disciplines. Within the framework of the Ryerson Curriculum Renewal White Paper, the proposed new curriculum will effectively collapse the two separate fashion programs in Fashion Design and Fashion Communication into a single program “Fashion” with five Majors: Fashion Design (existing), Fashion Communication (existing), Materials and Fabrication (new), Fashion Studies (new), and Design Leadership (new). Within the scope of the report, further details of the proposed new fashion curriculum are not included and will be presented separately as a Proposal for Complex Changes to Curriculum in 2017.

We are confident that the new curriculum will focus on producing “industry leaders” rather than industry followers as highlighted previously by peer reviewers and ACS.

Diversity

Diversity in fashion is an emerging perspective in critical thinking and the School of Fashion is one of the global leaders in framing pedagogy and research first implemented in 2012/13. All students are exposed to the discourse of Eurocentric views on fashion and diversity in culture, ethnicity, size, age, gender, ability, sexual orientation, and personal beliefs in their first year through a series of interdisciplinary projects. Further, students are encouraged in subsequent years to investigate diversity from a human-centred design approach. In their final year, Fashion Design students articulate diversity through their collections by selecting their own models (as opposed to the traditional approach of fashion schools selecting a narrow scope of models without student input). Fashion Communication student capstones projects investigate the implications of thinking diverse through installations, documentaries, artefacts, and critical writing.

The School of Fashion is the founding partner in FCAD’s Centre of Fashion Diversity and Social Change, promoting collaborative research and creative work as most recently showcased by “Refashioning Masculinity” spearheaded by Dr. Ben Barry. The Centre has attracted current students and recent graduates in furthering its diversity and inclusion agenda and driving social change.

In our program, history and theory courses include readings and written assignments utilize research coming from existing and emerging disciplines in disability studies, feminism, LGBTQ studies, and post-colonial theory. New elective courses that have been introduced include FSN 508 World Fashion: Contemporary Perspectives, FSN 556 Design and Cultural Diversity, and FSN 704 Dress – Cultural Transformation.

Zone Education

The school encourages students to participate in zone learning programming offered by Ryerson and specifically the Fashion Zone. There are opportunities of project that include commercially viable products or services to be further developed. Expanding participation beyond a few students continues to be challenging given the curricular course load and work commitments.

Technology

Improved access to technology, such as digital prototyping and fabrication, are critical to innovation for students and researchers. In addition to the school extensive inventory of traditional equipment to facilitate the construction of garments, this past year the focus has been on acquiring equipment for both Fashion Design and Fashion Communication students, including a laser cutter, 3D printers, and a digital textile printer. The school requires an additional full-time technician to operate and maintain the machines and support users in developing new applications. This investment in staffing has been proposed in the school's 2016/17 budget.

Faculty Recruitment / Workload

There are currently 15 RFA positions, not including 1 unfilled (unsuccessful search) and 1 position on hold (nonreplaced retirement). The school continues to rely heavily on CUPE instructors to delivery the program. In 2015/16 there were 27 CUPE instructors.

The school has received 1 resignation (retirement) effective Sept 1, 2016 and anticipates a further 2 retirements by 2019. All three RFA members teach primarily in Fashion Design. The school has requested the approval to hire 2 RFA in 2016/17 to rebuild and maintain our expertise in Fashion Design. These two positions have been conceived with "forward-hiring" in mind to ensure that the school's new curriculum can be adequately supported.

The recent ratification of the RFA collective agreement has implications on the workload of faculty members who currently teach 3+2 courses (effectively up to 9+9 hours). The new workload calls for teaching 2+2 courses (effectively 6+6 hours). These changes essentially leave 10 courses per year unaccounted for teaching and will have a significant impact on already tight budgetary constraints. The implications will be to offer fewer courses, increase sections sizes, and increase the number of CUPE instructors. This runs counter to peer reviewers' and ASC recommendations to enhance student learning by offering more electives to provide students with more choice and complement large lecture courses with smaller tutorials.

The proposed new curriculum will take these parameters into consideration. A meeting with the University Planning Office to review the cost of delivering the current program

versus the anticipated cost of delivering the new program is expected to be scheduled for August 2016.

Student Performance

This section address initiatives that were identified throughout the Developmental Plan and subsequent updates arising from discussions the ASC.

The objective is to balance large lecture classes with tutorials to allow students review and apply concepts in a smaller, interactive setting. There are currently 9 large lecture courses. In Fall 2015, we implemented a common 2-hour lecture for 162 students and 6 1-hour tutorials with an average of 27 students for FSN 400 Fashion in International Markets. The tutorial instructors help guide students to develop their ideas in a number of areas - research and analytical skills for their group project and individual case study. Students had opportunities to interact, involve, and discuss their case study assignments and reading assignments. Based on the instructors' observations, students were engaged in the tutorial class. For Fall 2016, we are applying a similar approach to FSN 707 Research Methods for students in 3rd year. It is our intent to introduce tutorials to one first year lecture course in 2017/18. Limitations to consider are available teaching spaces for tutorials and finding qualified GAs or CUPE instructors.

Increasing written assignments in first year continues to be under development in the History of Art courses and under refinement in Intro to Fashion and Fashion Concept and Theory courses.

Introducing digital approaches to FSN 121 and 221 (Fundamentals of Design and Colour) in first year has now achieved a 30% digital and 70% traditional threshold. The goal is to achieve 50/50. The challenge is to schedule the MAC lab, which as a shared FCAD facility is already booked to capacity.

Review of Program Learning Outcomes

The Program Learning Outcomes for both Fashion Design and Fashion Communication share a common platform on the premise that a common first year curriculum delivered to both options followed by discipline-focused study in years 2 and 3 culminates in individual collection / capstone projects and a final shared course.

The ten shared Program Learning Outcomes are:

- Identify and develop solutions to address issues related to Canadian and International fashion markets.
- Demonstrate integrity, social responsibility, and ethical business practices.
- Think critically and articulate the resulting ideas in visual, written, and oral forms.

- Think creatively and express the resulting ideas in visual, written, and oral forms.
- Demonstrate the skills and techniques required to apply innovative and creative ideas to fashion, design, and art.
- Manage their own continual learning and development in changing circumstances within and beyond the field.
- Demonstrate research and inquiry skills required to pursue further study.
- Gain a variety of academic and industry experiences such as exchanges, internships, professional events, and competitions at the national and international level.
- Contextualize the complex social role of fashion, design, and art through the study of history and theory.
- Work collaboratively to develop professional and interpersonal skills.

The unique Program Learning Outcome for fashion design is:

- Research, design and execute the development of products and/or garments of men's, women's or children's wear.

The unique Program Learning Outcome for fashion communication is:

- Research, design and execute traditional and emerging forms of communication in fashion promotion.

Strengthening Learning Outcomes through Curriculum Revisions

As outlined earlier, the school's approach to rethinking its existing curriculum is to strengthen Program Learning Outcomes by narrowing specific skills requirements and acquisition to allow for expanded theoretical and conceptual knowledge development. In order for graduates of the program to function in the fashion industry, those students who are not interested in the making, nonetheless need to understand how making is performed, but that knowledge can be imparted through a lecture as opposed to learning the skill in a studio environment. It can be argued that in today's fashion ecosystem, for example, a professional styling a photo shoot does not need to know how to pattern draft and construct a dress.

Hence the school has rationalized the existing 10 shared Program Learning Outcomes into 7 revised iterations with a unique Learning Outcome for each of the five proposed Majors in the new curriculum.

The 7 shared Learning Program Outcomes are:

- Identify and develop solutions to address issues related to fashion markets.
- Demonstrate integrity, social innovation, sustainability and ethical business practices.
- Think critically and articulate the resulting ideas in visual, written and oral forms.
- Think creatively and express the resulting ideas in visual, written and oral forms.
- Manage their own continual learning and development in changing circumstances within and beyond the field.
- Engage in experiential learning through a variety of academic and professional opportunities such as exchanges, internships, industry events and competitions.
- Work collaboratively to develop professional and interpersonal skills.

Below are the unique Program Learning Outcomes for each of the proposed Majors:

Fashion Design: Research, design, develop and construct apparel for people.

Fashion Communication: Research, design, develop and create modes of communication using traditional and emerging media.

Materials and Fabrication: Demonstrate innovative techniques and creative translation of ideas and materials in textiles and accessory design.

Fashion Studies: Contextualize the complex social role of fashion, design, and art through the study of history and theory.

Design Leadership: Develop leadership skills and apply innovative strategies through design thinking.

Program Learning Outcomes Not Meeting Level of Proficiency

While the school is confident in students' exposure to diverse experiences in each of the Program Learning Outcomes, there are examples where students may not meet the required level of proficiency upon completion of their program.

Students meet challenges when presenting their ideas in written and oral forms. This can be contributed to a large number of lecture courses that are delivered passively and may not offer opportunities for students to submit more extensive written assignments. Additionally, there are few opportunities for students to present their work orally in front of their peers. In contrast, however, in lab courses with fewer students in a section, the delivery of the course focuses on critique and feedback by students to their peers and frequent opportunities to make in-class presentation.

Students equate a lack of access to technology as a barrier to creativity and innovation. The school has responded by investing in equipment such as 3D printers, laser cutter, digital sketch tablets and encouraging collaboration with zone learning opportunities. While there is still work to be done, limitations on available and suitable spaces that provide adequate ventilation may not meet the demand of students (and researchers) looking to use technology for their projects.

While some challenges are the result of operational needs and budgetary constraints, the school is committed to improving shortfalls in proficiency through strategic program delivery and continued monitoring of global fashion education. We are proud to rank 12th in last year's survey of leading international fashion school by the influential website Business of Fashion (<https://www.businessoffashion.com/education/rankings/2015/bachelors>).

In summary, our school is excited to apply what we learned for this extensive Periodic Program Review process to a new School of Fashion curriculum in maintaining and strengthening our reputation of producing tomorrow's fashion leaders making their mark nationally and internationally.

Kindest regards,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Ott', with a stylized, cursive script.

Robert Ott,
Chair and Associate Professor, School of Fashion