



School of Journalism
Faculty of Communication
& Design

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To: Charles Falzon, Dean, Faculty of Communication and Design
Dr. Michael Benarroch, Provost and Vice-President Academic
Dr. Kelly Mackay, Vice-Provost Academic
Cc: Tina West Director, Curriculum Quality Assurance, Office of the Vice-Provost Academic

June 28, 2019

Dear Dean Falzon, Dr. Benarroch and Dr. Mackay:

On behalf of the School of Journalism, we hereby submit our One-Year Follow-up Report for the Journalism Periodic Program Review, as requested by Dr. Mackay. In this document we respond point by point to the specific requests for information presented by the Academic Standards Committee.

1. Progress on the developmental plan.

- **Complete, as quickly as possible, the implementation of the new BJourn curriculum introduced Fall 2015**

Completed. The first cohort of students who studied exclusively under the new curriculum beginning in first year graduated in June 2019.

- **Track student progress in the new curriculum**

a) We tracked our graduating students by conducting three focus groups in Week 10–11 of the Winter 2019 semester. All students surveyed said the new program was effective (acceptable, 25%; good, 58%; very good, 19%). Four-fifths of the respondents intended to pursue a career in journalism, while the remainder either were looking to law school or graduate school, or wanted to move into communications. Students highlighted the hands-on, experiential teaching, the excellence of the professors (there were some calls for more diversity in faculty going forward), and the opportunity to network while in school. There was concern about repetition from class to class, year over year, although this was balanced by the understanding that repetition develops skill sets. There was some concern over having too many choices and not knowing the right path to take through the program; recent improvements to our academic advising process, discussed below, are intended in part to respond to this concern.

b) We have discussed the paths that students are taking in every meeting of the Undergraduate Program Committee (approx. 10 each year), most of our faculty meetings (approx. eight per year) and annual Faculty Retreats (May 2017, 2018, 2019). With the new curriculum, students now have five options for course “packages” (rather than three) in their seventh and eighth semesters. The program committee and faculty meeting discussions addressed how faculty would navigate the changed menu of offerings, the impact on delivery of each of the courses, and revision of course outlines and program learning outcomes to reflect the diversity of choices.

c) One of the significant curriculum changes is to the options offered students in their final year; in the past, a majority of the students were channeled into one of the “Masthead” courses, with only a few taking the non-Masthead option. We have gathered data on the number of students who chose the “Masthead” option as compared to other final-year options. These results show that students are taking advantage of the flexibility offered under the new curriculum.

Year	Total BJourn Grads	Masthead
2017–18 *Old Curriculum	126	110
2018–19 *New Curriculum	99 (plus Fall 2019)	70
2019–20	N/A	53

- **Continue innovations through new curriculum-delivery modes, including asynchronous e-learning, interconnection between lecture and lab modes, and the development of new online and hybrid courses—beginning with online lectures for JRN 344 Journalism and Society (first offered in 2017–18).**

We have made considerable progress in these areas. Our Reporting on Indigenous Issues (JRN 350) is offered online. The online rollout of JRN 344 (under its new name, Making a Difference: How Journalism Matters) has been successful.

In terms of the interconnection between lecture and lab modes, the most significant change for second-year classes was with JRN 272 Feature Writing and Current Affairs. In Winter 2019, the course format was a “flipped classroom,” with a weekly two-hour lecture delivered via eLearning. In their four-hour weekly tutorials, students worked in small groups led by the tutorial leaders (who are all experienced journalists) to do hands-on exercises and build major features, organized in relation to six featured neighbourhoods. The completed features are published on this site: <http://tdotcommunity.ca/>.

We have also introduced online instruction modules for many other courses, particularly in the first year. For examples, see <http://insession.journalism.ryerson.ca/workshops/>.

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- **Continue to develop curriculum that serves diverse student aspirations and makes the learning experience of marginalized groups, including Aboriginal students, as inclusive as possible. This will begin with implementation of the plan for raising understanding of Aboriginal People's issues and the challenges and opportunities for reporting their stories in a proper context, including implementation of the plan for 2016–17 described in Part 5.2 above.**

The School has taken several steps to increase our students' awareness of and exposure to Indigenous issues. Here are a few examples: the core introductory course, JRN103, included a module in Fall 2018 on covering Indigenous issues, including a lecture by Distinguished Visiting Professor Duncan McCue, who is Anishinaabe and a member of the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation in southern Ontario. The following week, members of Ryerson's Indigenous community were invited to class for a panel discussion about the controversy over the Egerton Ryerson statue. Students were then assigned to conduct interviews with the guests and write news stories.

In JRN 270, a mandatory second-year course, students were assigned in Fall 2018 to research, report and produce video, audio and online stories about Louis Riel Day in Toronto.

In JRN 806, Fall 2108, a final-year course in advanced feature writing, students responded in writing and discussed in class long-form Indigenous narratives by Tanya Talaga (2017), Dan David (1996; 1997) and Duncan McCue (2016).

The School's Atkinson Lecture for 2018–19 was delivered by Ryan McMahon, an Anishinaabe comedian, writer, media maker for the *Globe & Mail*, Vice, CBC, CBC Aboriginal, APTN, and host of the podcast "Thunder Bay."

Reporting on Indigenous Issues (JRN 350) is offered to students in their final undergraduate years (and soon to MJ students). It responds directly to the TRC Calls to Action. It ensures that students know the basics about the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the history of residential schools, and the legal relationship between the federal government and Indigenous peoples. It also encourages students to report on science, education, health, political and other stories through an Indigenous lens, putting Indigenous voices first in stories which are situated in traditional beat reporting.

Thanks to Prof. Joyce Smith, the School has also made arrangements so that students who report on stories in Indigenous communities can make an appropriate

offering of tobacco. <http://rsj.journalism.ryerson.ca/rsj-students-now-have-access-to-tobacco-offerings/>

- **Make “learning journalism by doing innovative journalism for real audiences” more central to the second halves of the BJourn and MJ curricula. This includes developing sustainable plans for high-quality journalism, packaged and delivered innovatively, in all School publications**

Stories produced by students in the third-year news reporting workshops are regularly published in the *Ryersonian*, and students in lower level courses also have opportunities for publication in this way.

For examples of second-year students’ work that is published online, see <http://tdotcommunity.ca/>

The *Ryersonian* has expanded its mandate to cover the broader urban community around Ryerson, not just the campus. For example, the *Ryersonian* provided comprehensive coverage of the Gay Village serial killer story. Reporters followed the legal proceedings, leading to a guilty plea by the man charged with committing the murders, and reactions in the community. The *Ryersonian* also did extensive coverage of homelessness in Toronto Centre. That included stories on the city’s efforts to provide emergency shelter; stories on the volunteer group Homeless Connect Toronto and its efforts to deliver medical, legal and other services to underserved communities, including the homeless; and stories on the research and work done by Dixon Hall, which serves at-risk and vulnerable communities in east downtown Toronto.

The *Ryerson Review of Journalism*, meanwhile, has evolved into a multi-platform news organization, with a vibrant online presence, a podcast, newsletter updates, and live events: <https://rrj.ca/>

- **Articulate an enhanced “value proposition” of the BJourn degree that expresses the many benefits of training research on current events, critical thinking through verification and clarity of communication using multiple platforms. Work more consistently with other journalism schools and organizations to foster public awareness of what journalism is and its social importance as an impartial source of information for the public.**

Two new final-year courses in particular have been valuable to students preparing for a broader range of career paths that can be pursued with a BJourn degree.

The Capstone Project course (JRN 840) gives students the opportunity to conduct in-depth research in areas such as history, marketing, smartphone app development, etc.

Building the Brand (JRN 842) has been an extremely popular fourth-year elective, preparing students to think in entrepreneurial ways about developing and managing their careers.

The School has taken a leadership role in J-Schools Canada, an organization launched in late 2018. It is a partnership of 17 (to June 15, 2019) Canadian journalism schools with a goal to promote the study, practice and reflection of journalism education in Canada and internationally through the World Journalism Education Congress; to strengthen the common purpose of Canadian journalism programs in providing quality education at the college and university level for future generations of Canadian journalists; and to operate as the official publishing body responsible for J-Source, with funding tied to J-Schools Canada/ÉcolesJ annual membership fees for Canadian college and university journalism. The site will operate as a significant showcase to publish student work.

- **Continue to grow News Studies enrolment, aided by a more robust “marketing” of these courses, through the new FCAD-wide focus on interdisciplinary learning and teaching, and by the already-apparent strong uptake of the Public Relations Minor by Professional Communication students.**

Enrolment in NNS courses increased by more than 80 per cent (from 223 to 408 registrations) between 2014–15 and 2018–19. (See [NNS enrolment numbers](#).) Two new NNS courses—NNS410 (Queer Media) and NNS419 (Journalism in Comedy)—have been offered. The program has been marketed through advertising by developing marketing materials that were sent to all NNS students and distributed across campus, and through class visits. Fewer NNS courses were offered in 2018–19, which accounts for the decline in registrations last year.

The NNS courses also became an option for Creative Industries students to complete their minor. The majority of NNS students are from other FCAD schools.

- **Work with FCAD development, administrative and academic colleagues to implement significant renovations to the School’s second-floor spaces, as described in Part 7.2.3.**

The opening of the Catalyst and Catalyst Learning Lab in September 2018 provided new instructional space for our radio and other courses. New edit suites were constructed in RCC 223. The Catalyst also provides office space for the Ryerson Journalism Research Centre (RJRC), space for public lectures organized by the RJRC and *Ryerson Review of Journalism*, and office space for a visiting professor from Doshisha University in Kyoto, Japan.

- **Work with the Dean of, and colleagues in, FCAD to find more effective means of:**
 - **responding to students' increasingly challenging mental-health and academic-accommodations needs,**
 - **providing a consistently high quality of academic advising,**
 - **advocating for the university to allocate more financial resources for essential student services, and**
 - **designing a system that allows predictability and availability of elective course offerings.**

RSJ has been the beneficiary of an FCAD faculty-wide initiative that saw the addition of a "SHaWN" (student health and well-being navigator) to help FCAD students facing personal and academic challenges identify and navigate the many supports available across the university. In addition, the School of Journalism's Student Affairs Coordinator visits all mandatory classes on a monthly basis in Years 1 & 2 (also in Year 3, though less frequently) to remind students about the kinds of support that are available.

January, 2018 saw the launch of a new D2L site called Accommodating Accommodation, produced by RSJ instructor and technician Sally Goldberg Powell and FCAD Teaching Chair and RSJ professor Ann Rauhala, in consultation with the university's Academic Accommodation office. This course, which includes short videos and links to information, was designed specifically for instructors teaching in FCAD to better equip them to meet accommodation needs. All FCAD instructors can visit the site, view the videos and earn a certificate of completion. More than 30 FCAD instructors have done the certificate and many more have visited the site, six months after its launch.

To date, more than 20 RSJ staff and faculty have completed Thrive RU resilience training or related workshops led by ThriveRU expert Diana Brecher. That training, which identifies key characteristics that contribute to well being and resilience and how to amplify them, has prompted instructors and staff to discuss and teach these practices in our classes. ThriveRU newsletters are also sent out to students each week by the School's Student Affairs Coordinator, Bev Petrovic.

The School has introduced new processes to provide high-quality academic advising. Students fill out a [Google form](#) that asks them which areas they need help with. The forms are checked regularly to monitor their progress. With the new process, all questions and inquiries are dealt with in a timely manner.

To better plan course offerings of core electives, the School created its own process that begins three months before the university's official course-intentions period. Journalism holds in-class workshops to guide students through a specially designed "pre-course intentions" form to indicate their intentions for journalism electives. The School puts considerable effort into ensuring every student completes this process

(including providing guidance by the Student Affairs Coordinator). This process allows the School to better predict the demand for specific courses and adjust our offerings accordingly.

Unfortunately, as a result of the recent round of budget cuts, it has been necessary to cease offering some electives in 2019–20 and to offer fewer sections of some others.

- **Update our School's SRC policy to allow for the determination of priority areas for study and leverage funding opportunities to foster research in these areas**

The School of Journalism adopted a new and updated SRC policy in September 2018. [Here](#) is the link to the policy.

- **Continue planning and implement partnership with Journalists for Human Rights and Witwatersrand University to share values and techniques for journalism in Canada and sub-Saharan Africa, with a particular focus on entrepreneurial media ventures.**

The partnership with RSJ and JHR is currently dormant as Witwatersrand University has raised enough money to run the program on its own: <https://medium.com/jamlab/meet-the-jamlab-accelerator-programme-teams-for-2019-94413c091385>.

Prof. Asmaa Malik, who established this connection initially, continues to be the external reviewer for Witwatersrand's graduate-level Creating Media course and is working on a longer-term scholarly collaboration with Journalism and Media Lab Accelerator Program director Indra de Lanerolle. She is also in conversation with the South African Media Innovation Program to do some advisory work with their incubator teams: <https://samip.mdif.org/participants/>

2. Feedback on how issues identified in the Self-Study regarding the phased-out curriculum have been addressed in the revised curriculum that was implemented in the Fall 2015.

Issues arising out of old curriculum (Bertha) led to an increasing awareness of its shortcomings in preparing students for a swiftly evolving media environment. These shortcomings included:

- It retained a print focus in the first year of the program that is inconsistent with current industry practice where journalists are expected to operate on all platforms from an early stage.

In response to this concern, students now begin to work in earnest in multimedia journalism in the second semester of first year. By the end of Year 1, students have reported using text, photos, video, audio and social media, doing all of this on daily deadlines.

- It delayed the introduction of digital reporting skills until the second semester of the second year, thereby losing vital learning and practice time on what is now an essential set of skills.

This is no longer the case—see above.

- It didn't provide enough student choice to accommodate an increasingly large number of our students who, while they maintain an interest in journalism, decide to pursue careers in different or related professions, including advanced academic study.

Students now have much more choice about how to proceed through the program and are clearly taking advantage of these opportunities. Anecdotally, we see at least a half-dozen students opting to pursue graduate studies each year

- It didn't allow sufficient flexibility in modes of delivery, relying largely on small lab- style classes even where well-prepared lectures could provide a more consistent (and more sustainable) delivery of core knowledge.

All first- and second-year courses are now offered in combined lecture/lab format, whereas as recently as 2014, virtually all first- and second-year courses were strictly labs.

- It didn't provide enough opportunity for students to prepare reporting assignments for publication to real audiences at an increasingly professional level of achievement.

This point is addressed under "Progress on the developmental plan" above.

When building the new curriculum ("Charlie") we wanted the curricular framework to:

1. Be NIMBLE enough to accommodate rapid changes in the field, including continuing digital transformation of all journalism.
2. Find the right BALANCE between specialized skills and platform-agnostic core competencies.
3. Build preparedness for a DIVERSE range of students' and graduates' paths, keeping in mind the School's reputation and core mission of educating journalists.

4. Provide a SUSTAINABLE framework that avoids the necessity of chipping away at class size and elective choices under pressure from budget cuts. (Unfortunately, budget cuts for the 2019-20 academic years have forced us to drop several electives or offer fewer sections.)
5. Balance respect for academic AUTONOMY against expectation of shared learning goals.
6. Present REQUIRED courses as the means by which we achieve a set of specific knowledge and skills that are core to all or most journalism. This set will evolve as rapidly as the surrounding journalism landscape.
7. Ensure a steady SEQUENCING of skill-building and knowledge-building within these required "foundational" courses, with some expectation of self-learning.
8. Build on this foundation in third year to ensure a consistent level of PREPAREDNESS for final year and beyond, even while fostering diverse interests and aptitudes.
9. Encourage PUBLISHED reporting, through existing or new platforms, at strategically appropriate stages in the curriculum.
10. Be open to, and respond to, continuing FEEDBACK from industry partners.

3. Revised program learning outcomes and mapping of required and elective core courses in the current curriculum to the revised learning outcomes.

We have made significant progress in establishing learning outcomes for all our courses.

In February 2018, we consulted our colleagues in Graphic Communications Management, which had recently completed a comprehensive mapping of its course- and degree-level outcomes. Following that, the School of Journalism's undergraduate and graduate program committees embarked on a shared initiative to map our respective degrees' learning outcomes. Work on this project began at our annual faculty/instructor retreat in May 2018, when we devoted the entire two-day retreat to a critical examination of our degree. We started by brainstorming a range of answers to the question, "What knowledge and skills should our students possess by the time they complete their degree?" We then looked at each of those concepts—listed on flip-chart sheets and taped to the walls — and faculty and CUPE instructors added their course codes to any sheet that described a learning outcome that was addressed at any level in their courses, which proved to be a revealing exercise.

At that point, we had a collection of what we thought were reasonable learning outcomes, but found it difficult to allocate and unpack them across the courses in our degree. This process was especially challenging by virtue of what is generally seen as a strength of our degree, i.e., that our current curriculum offers students unprecedented choice. This means that our students can chart radically different paths from each other in the final year or two of their degree.

To assist in resolving the problem, we sought advice from subject-matter experts in Ryerson's Learning and Teaching Office. LTO experts Carolyn Hoessler and Lauren Wilson met with our senior leadership team to help us better understand how to write effective learning outcomes, and attended our half-day faculty and instructor conference in August 2018 to help our instructors match assessments to learning outcomes. By the end of that working session, many of our individual faculty and instructors had a clearer understanding of learning outcomes and of how to create assessments that logically address those outcomes. But that session covered only some of our courses, so much of our curriculum still lacked learning outcomes.

We met with Hoessler and Wilson once again in the fall to review the work done at the May retreat. Their expert critique indicated that our draft degree-level outcomes were still too specific, and not sufficiently broad to serve as suitable degree-level outcomes. At the conclusion of that meeting, we agreed to Hoessler and Wilson's suggestion that we put our goal of creating course-level learning objectives aside for the time being and instead focus on degree-level outcomes—or, as Hoessler phrased it, what we expect our students to know as they cross the convocation stage.

The School's senior leadership group worked with Hoessler and Wilson over the winter semester and we now have draft degree-level learning outcomes that will be put to a faculty vote and, if passed, sent to School Council for approval in the Fall of 2019. We'll also help individual faculty and instructors craft learning outcomes for their individual courses; those LOs will be reviewed and, where necessary, edited, as part of the course syllabus approval process in advance of the Fall 2019 semester (more on course outlines below).

4. Evidence that efforts have been made to review and improve course outlines.

All faculty and instructors are required to submit their draft course outlines to designated faculty reviewers (members of the School Leadership Group and the faculty member responsible for journalism courses cross-listed with the Chang School) before each semester begins. In August 2018, faculty and instructors received a copy of the University Senate's guide to course outlines along with a template, annotated by the chair of the School of Journalism to reflect additional rules and policies that are specific to RSJ ([here](#)). Faculty and instructors also received a checklist that lists the most common errors and deficiencies we see in course outlines. That checklist was used to provide feedback to assist guide any required revision to a draft course outline (you can see an example [here](#).)

5. A complete set of CVs, removing any duplicates and adding ones that were missing in the PPR submission.

Here are the links to [RFA CVs](#) and [CUPE CVs](#).

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. Neil".

Janice Neil
Chair, School of Journalism