

PERIODIC PROGRAM REVIEW EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – FASHION (BDes)

The Self-Study document is comprised of nine parts that provide a detailed overview of the undergraduate program in the School of Fashion.

Part 1 – Basic Information – describes the Bachelor of Design program, its two program streams in Fashion Design and Fashion Communication, the options students have to customize their educational experience and the various modes of course delivery. A short history of the program and overview of the administrative structure are also covered.

Part 2 – Developments Since Previous Program Review – provides a summary of strengths and weaknesses noted in the previous program review and developmental plan. It provides a summary of how specific issues identified by students, recent graduates and faculty have been addressed. It also addresses how recommendations from the Academic Standards Council and Senate have been addressed, including prioritizing the development of faculty SRC activities and faculty recruitment.

Part 3 – Societal Need – provides a detailed description of current and anticipated societal need. It describes how students are prepared for participation in the fields of Fashion Design and Fashion Communication by developing their vision and technical knowledge to make original garments to suit diverse needs. It also describes how students learn to articulate the prevailing state of fashion for a cross-section of related industries. Societal need is established through a discussion of clothing as a basic and enduring requirement that transcends functionality—stating that design, product quality and persuasive promotion all play significant roles in shaping consumers' choices in response to this ubiquitous need and that satisfying these combined elements provides the mandate for the School of Fashion.

Demand for the programs offered by the School of Fashion is identified through analysis of trends in application rates and specific selection factors such as academic qualification of applicants. Conclusions about recent trends are discussed in relation to competing programs in universities and colleges—underscoring the importance of adapting to the changing needs of fashion and related industries.

Part 4 – Program Outcomes – twelve program goals were articulated formally during the process of course mapping—these goals reflect the desired learning outcomes for students. Several sections are highlighted from the University plan, *Shaping the Future*, including: emphasis on the provision of High Quality, Societally-Relevant Undergraduate and Graduate Programs; initiatives to invite student engagement and experiential learning; strategies for learning and teaching excellence; prioritization of SRC; and the multiple ways in which the School of Fashion enhances the reputation of the University. It notes that a commitment to integrate theory into a skills-based curriculum and to provide skills transferable to related careers, position the School of Fashion to make significant contributions to the expanding discourse surrounding the cultural industries.

Part 5 – Academic Quality –an overview of the program, including a description of the common foundation year and the Design and Communication options— identifies important differences between the curricular structures of these options. Analysis of Course Mapping and Course to Goal Proficiency reveals issues in both program options related to the timing of introductory concepts / processes, reinforcement, and expectations of proficiency.

The School feels that there is tension between industry norms and the role that universities play in creating leaders to challenge exclusionary or discriminatory practices; as such, Fashion Diversity has been identified as a topic to be cultivated during the next period of curriculum review.

The program's relationship to the current discipline and profession is described with regard to the

intention to balance students' understanding of the conceptual intent of technology with specific working knowledge of equipment and software. The significance of professional practice is discussed with examples relating to specific core courses and the professional practice of many faculty members. Teaching and delivery methods highlight a diversity of approaches in the School with specific examples where linkages between courses provide students with a practical and working knowledge of how creative work can inform a range of projects and educational outcomes in a variety of settings. Also noted is the emphasis on team skills and the impressive outcomes in collaborative scenarios. Areas of student success are identified along with perceived barriers to success.

Part 6 – Academic Quality Indicator Analysis – there is an overview of faculty backgrounds and qualifications that underscore the interdisciplinary nature of the department. Five distinct clusters of research activity are identified and the SRC achievements of several faculty members are provided to establish an overview of the School of Fashion's research culture. Several subsections address undergraduate qualifications and identify required skills, aptitudes and academic requirements for admission, and provide analysis of retention and graduation data.

Detailed analysis of surveys, including the Student Satisfaction Survey conducted as part of this program review, indicates perceived areas of strength and weakness in both program options. Data relating to surveys of graduates, provided by the University Planning Office, indicate increases in satisfaction since 2003. An Employer indicates areas in which industry representatives agree and disagree with program goals and identify attributes and skills required by new employees. Comments made by members of an Advisory Council focus group confirm that creative skills need to be balanced with business skills and intellectual opportunities to prepare students for the fashion and fashion-related industries.

Part 7 – Resources – provides an overview of human resources including descriptions of the roles of faculty members, support staff, and academic assistants. It also addresses financial resources and details physical resources including descriptions of space allocation, studio facilities, equipment and technology.

Part 8 – Strengths Weaknesses Challenges and Opportunities – key strengths of the program are identified, including its rarity as a degree-granting fashion program—the School of Fashion is the first of two programs in Canada with few direct comparators globally. The interdisciplinary curriculum with significant access to the community and industry is highlighted along with experiential learning opportunities as significant strengths. The active international exchange program is noted as a way in which advanced students become acquainted with the practices and approaches in other cultures. Connections with outside stakeholders, including community leaders, industry partners, museums and arts institutions, are also identified as strengths possessed by the School of Fashion.

Weaknesses include the perception by students and faculty that workloads have been too heavy, and that certain aspects of curricular structure and the timing of courses have limited student choice. Limited support for writing and increasing enrolments, particularly in lecture-style classes, are identified as challenges that affect learning outcomes. Lack of focus on diversity in curricular content may emphasize and/or replicate Euro-centric industry norms. Ongoing budgetary cuts are identified as threats to the department's ability to innovate, expand and deliver the curriculum while responding to the need for active research agendas from faculty members. Opportunities lie with the implementation of new funding models, strategic partnerships with industry, accessing alternative university sources, and exploring institutional collaborations.

There is a desire to preserve specialization and professional aspects of the program while promoting greater student flexibility and working toward greater openness and collaboration with other FCAD programs. Challenges exist with public and academic misconceptions about Fashion as a rigorous field of study. There have been significant challenges with the lack of mentorship for faculty, and that teaching

and service have traditionally been given priority over research.

Part 9 – Developmental Plan

Key themes within the Developmental Plan are related to:

- Diversity and Inclusion
- Enhancing experiential learning and academic intensity
- Creating curricular flexibility
- Differentiating the School of Fashion from programs at other institutions

The School has identified a number of approaches it intends to explore in order to address these key themes.

- Continuing with an overt focus on diversity and inclusion in new curriculum and mobilizing this knowledge from the classroom into the community and fashion industry
- Developing a new BA in Fashion Studies
- Expanding specializations, minors and modules
- Collaborations with other programs and faculty SRC
- Implementing a focus on business and fashion
- Integrating Zone Education
- Integrating and improving access to technology
- Expanding exchange opportunities