

FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

**PERIODIC PROGRAM REVIEW (PPR)
Bachelor of Commerce
In Retail Management
Ted Rogers School of Management (TRSM)**

In accordance with the Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), this final assessment report provides a synthesis of the external evaluation and the internal response and assessments of the undergraduate **Bachelor of Commerce - Retail Management** program. The report identifies the significant strengths of the program, together with opportunities for program improvement and enhancement, and it sets out and prioritizes the recommendations that have been selected for implementation.

The Implementation Plan identifies who will be responsible for leading the implementation of the recommendations; who will be responsible for providing any resources entailed by those recommendations; and timelines for acting on and monitoring the implementation of the recommendations.

SUMMARY OF THE PERIODIC PROGRAM REVIEW OF THE RETAIL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

The Retail Management program submitted a self-study report to the Vice-Provost Academic on April 8, 2020. The self-study presented the program description and learning outcomes, an analytical assessment of the program, and program data including the data collected from students, alumni and employers along with the standard University Planning data tables. Appended were the course outlines for all core required and elective courses in the program and the CVs for all RFA faculty members in the School of Retail Management and all other faculty who have recently taught core courses.

Two arm's-length external reviewers, Dr. Patrali Chatterjee (Mukhopadhyay), Department of Marketing, Feliciano School of Business, Montclair State University, and Dr. Robert P. Jones, Department of Hospitality and Retail Management, Texas Tech University, were appointed by the Dean of TRSM from a set of proposed reviewers. They reviewed the self-study documentation and then conducted a site visit at Ryerson University from October 23 to 25, 2019.

The visit included meetings with the Provost and Vice-President Academic; Vice-Provost Academic; Dean, TRSM; Associate Dean, Faculty and Academic; Associate Dean, Research & Graduate Studies; and the Director, School of Retail Management. The PRT also met with several other members of the School of Retail Management including staff, students, and faculty members, as well as with alumni, members of the Advisory Council, and the Associate Chief Librarian. A general tour of the campus was provided, including a tour of the Business Building, the Library and Jorgenson Hall.

In their report, dated November 25, 2019, the Peer Review Team (PRT) provided feedback that describes how the Retail Management program meets the IQAP evaluation criteria and is consistent with the University's mission and academic priorities.

The main areas of strength identified by the PRT include the industry experience of some of the faculty; a practical industry-focused curriculum; the mandatory paid internship or optional co-op requirement; industry participation in the classroom and in extracurricular programs; and, the School's location and facilities.

The PRT also identified areas for improvement, including addressing students' poor performance in Introductory Accounting and Economics courses in first year, which impact their GPA and prevent them from applying for internships and co-ops; and, a strain on the demands of faculty and staff.

The Chair of the Retail Management program submitted a response to the PRT Report on December 20, 2019. The response to both the PRT Report and the Program's Response was submitted by the Dean of TRSM on March 12, 2020.

The Academic Standards Committee completed its assessment of the Retail Management Program Review on May 7, 2020. The Committee indicated that a thorough, analytical and self-critical program review was conducted. The School integrated into the developmental plan feedback from students, alumni, employers and peer reviewers, and outlined a comprehensive plan for program enhancements moving forward.

The Academic Standards Committee recommends that the program continue, as well as provide a one-year follow-up report by June 30, 2021, as follows:

1. Report on the status of the initiatives outlined in the Implementation Plan with a focus on the transition of the degree program to 40 credits.

Presented to Senate for Approval: June 2, 2020

Start date of next Periodic Program Review: 2024-25

SUMMARY OF THE REVIEWERS' RECOMMENDATIONS WITH THE PROGRAM'S AND DEAN'S RESPONSES

As proposed by the Reviewing Team:

RECOMMENDATION 1. Improve the student mix in the RM program through targeted efforts to increase conversion rates for first and second choice applicants with high grades. Increasing awareness of scholarships, digital retail components of the program and industry initiatives, student placements six months after graduation, vignettes of successful alumni in outreach efforts to high school students, industry, community and government will raise the profile of the program, improve the student mix with the added benefit of a stronger pool of MscM students downstream.

Department's Response: We acknowledge that we will need to develop a strategic approach that entails outcome-oriented recruitment messages including placement rates and career stories from graduates, as you noted. In the past year, the program has started this effort by recording 12 videos of alumni speaking about their careers and adding several student and alumni profiles to the school website. These types of stories and successes will become the foundation for prospective students, and in particular, it may be targeted to increase conversion rates of those who have already applied to the Retail program as their 1st or 2nd choice.

Dean's Response: See response to recommendation 6, below.

RECOMMENDATION 2. Improve accessibility of international study tours: The international study tours piloted by Drs. Hong Yu and Frances Gunn provide an immersive experience, providing students first-hand knowledge of state-of-art retail practices at leading retailers and designers. Other faculty are expanding the initiative offering more students the opportunity, however financial constraints make it out of reach for many students. The RM Program recognizes this issue and offers subsidized retail trips to Canadian retailers in other provinces (e.g., Vancouver). We request the RM Program, the Council of Advisors, TRSM and Ryerson University explore options to reduce costs and offer scholarships to make these opportunities more inclusive keeping with Ryerson

University's commitment to accessibility, so more students are able to participate at least once during their program.

Department's Response: The program's history in offering multiple retail travel study opportunities for students (e.g., China, Italy, Netherlands, etc.) has been a key component of the experiential education to which prospective students may look forward. However, accessibility through funding support has been inconsistent. Recent developments suggest that students may be able to access increased funding for such trips in the future through the Ryerson International office and the Dean's office. Going forward, the upcoming trip to London, England in 2020 as part of the RMG917 course will be one of the first to benefit.

Dean's Response: Not specifically addressed.

RECOMMENDATION 3. The annual one-day internal "Retail Research Colloquium" in the winter semester is an excellent initiative to spur research activity and knowledge sharing between faculty, MScM students and research-oriented undergraduate seniors. Faculty grant writing to provide research assistantships for international students serve dual purposes – student development towards research-based careers as well much-needed research support for faculty. We recommend faculty receive grant-writing assistance, research support and travel resources for co-published research and attendance at academic and professional conferences.

Department's Response: TRSM, at the faculty level, does offer assistance with grant-writing, travel funding for conferences and peer-group support. Notably, with the PhD program on the horizon, we acknowledge that increased access to resources dedicated to research may be necessary. Within the Retail program, this year's Retail Research Colloquium will be expanded to include a larger group of participants from the faculty and graduate students in other departments for shared learning and stimulating collaboration opportunities. Undergraduate students with an interest in future graduate studies are also invited to this event.

Dean's Response: See response to recommendation 9, below.

RECOMMENDATION 4. The establishment of a clear pathway from the undergraduate program to the MScM in Retail Research to potentially a new Ph.D. program needs to be formalized. Faculty teaching loads and commitments must be commensurate with the rigor required in the graduate retail program.

Department's Response: We will consider new ways to formalize potential pathways into the graduate programs.

Dean's Response: See response to recommendation 9, below.

As proposed by the program in the self-study:

RECOMMENDATION 5. To include the "Honours" designation in the degree title.

Dean's Response: I strongly support adding the "Honours" designation to the Retail B.Comm as a 4-year degree. Given the timing of this review completion, this recommendation should be targeted for the Fall 2020.

RECOMMENDATION 6. To focus marketing of the RM program that highlights opportunities for internships, co-op, retail as a career... & unique retail curriculum.

Dean's Response: While the TRSM Marketing Communication team will consider how future Retail specific campaigns align with the broader TRSM recruitment efforts, it is encouraging to see the ongoing efforts of dissemination. I recognize that these appear in the form of student and alumni-based testimonials that highlight their experiences within and beyond the program (e.g., internships, career, etc.). In this regard, I agree with the external review team's recommendations to further increase the outreach in attracting transfer students from other university programs while motivating current students through a concerted strategy of retention.

RECOMMENDATION 7. To Discontinue the Part-time degree program offering.

Dean's Response: Given the low interest, low enrolment, and subpar retention rates (25% after 4 years) of the

part-time option within the Retail program, I agree with the recommendation to discontinue the part-time degree program. In lieu of displacing the part-time pathway, I encourage the program to further promote the minor option in Retail or standalone retail certificate pathways through the Chang School of Continuing Education. This provides a ready alternative for students who seek a part-time option that includes some of the core topics in retail studies. This recommendation should be targeted for Fall 2021 including submitting calendar changes for Fall 2020.

RECOMMENDATION 8. Explore opportunities to identify and offer relevant and evolving paths of study within the curriculum through innovative teaching methods.

Dean's Response: I agree that the program should identify clear paths within the curriculum and innovative teaching strategies that will serve a dual purpose in addressing the needs of current and prospective students. The creation of pathways (e.g. formal concentrations or informal study planning guides) related to specific topics of interest and career roles will complement the degree. It will help in developing clear marketing campaigns surrounding these pathways. This will enable current students to take increased ownership in directing their education to ensure that their study plans align with the individual goals and trends of the Retail industry.

Moreover, the department can increase flexibility and student success by lowering the total number of courses required for degree completion to 40 (currently 45). This will better align with other TRSM schools that already have or will all be moving forward with 40 total courses in their curriculum. This may include exploring how to support student success in quantitative courses (as identified by the external reviewers) through discussions with the School of Accounting and Finance to see if their current ACC and FIN courses are suitable for retail students, or if sector-specific content, tutorials, and other supports may be developed in lieu of creating new retail-specific Accounting and Finance courses.

As retention strategies are of paramount importance, I recognize the need for greater support for the Retail students. With this in mind, TRSM have begun to explore a centralized advising model that oversees the wider student body of the faculty, while recognizing the need for retail-specific advising as per the recommendation put forth by the external reviewers. As we are in the process of integrating and shaping a faculty-wide centralized advising unit, we hope to seamlessly integrate the Retail group to better support our retail students.

RECOMMENDATION 9. Explore opportunities for funding to support and sustain the ongoing integration of retail undergraduate students in faculty research projects.

Dean's Response: I am excited by the progress of our PhD proposal and see the final recommendation of the self-study as further strengthening the research profile of TRSM and Ryerson. Retail's interest in supporting the integration of undergraduates in research is an encouraging sign that builds on past successes with supervising students in the MScM. While the dean's office cannot promise specific dedicated funding at this time, I look forward to a proposal and needs assessment to consider how to best support this initiative.

Lastly, I recognize the academic demands on the faculty that were raised by the external reviewers. As several hold cross-appointments and/or occupies higher-level administrative roles, I further look to support the growth of the Retail program in its faculty complement (e.g., new hires), pending resource availability and budgetary approvals.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Recommendation #1: To include the "Honours" designation in the degree title.
Rationale: As a four year B.Comm, the degree in Retail Management has been mapped to the OCAV table of UDLES for an Honours degree at the Bachelor's level.

Objective: The Honours designation typically helps to differentiate Bachelor’s degree programs that incorporate a higher level of achievement through the completion of a 4-year academic program rather than non-honours degrees that may only require 3 years of study. While the B.Comm degree in Retail Management has always been a 4-year program, it has not included this designation. The addition of the honours designation will help position graduates from the RM program on equal footing to their peers who have completed 4-year degrees at other post secondary institutions and as a point of differentiation from shorter college diploma programs.

Implementation Actions:

- Upon approval of this Program Review, the School will propose this change be made to the Ryerson Undergraduate Program Calendar for the 2021/2022 academic year.

Timeline:

- Submission of proposal memo to Academic Standards Committee, May 2020
- Submission of calendar changes to the Registrar office by October 2020.

Responsibility for leading initiative:

- Program Director

Responsibility for approving recommendation, providing resources and overall monitoring:

- Office of the Registrar

Recommendation #2: To Discontinue the Part-time degree program offering.

Rationale:

- Part-time program admissions have averaged less than 8 students annually over 7 years.
- Retention rates for this group are only 25% after 4 years in the program.
- It is sometimes viewed as a “back door” entry point for prospective students who were deemed underqualified for the full-time RM program.
- Timing and nature of several core courses, including 4th year capstone classes prove challenging for part-time students to attend in the day yet limited interest/ability to offer evening, online or tied sections through continuing education for these senior level courses.
- As a result of the above, the use of course substitutions for core retail courses had become a norm to assist part-time students complete their requirements for graduation.
- Students completing the more established part-time degree in Business Management now have access to the Minor in Retail Management that wasn't available prior to the previous PPR and these Retail courses are available as online offerings.

Objective:

- Having already suspended new registrations in the part-time degree in Retail Management as of Fall 2017 and pending the outcome of this review, the formal discontinuation of this offering for new students is proposed to take effect in Fall 2021. Current students will continue to be supported on an individual basis toward the successful completion of their degree as they have been to date.

Actions:

- Approval of proposal to discontinue Part-Time degree offering in Summer 2020.
- Amendment to Ryerson Undergraduate Course Calendar to be submitted by October 2020 to become effective in Fall 2021.
- Update all online (Ryerson, TRSM, Chang School) references to the Part-Time degree with directions to the Part-time degree in business management and minor in retail.

Timeline:

- Approval of proposal in Summer 2020; commences Fall 2021

Responsibility for leading initiative:

- Program Director

Responsibility for approving recommendation, providing resources and overall monitoring:

- Faculty Dean

Recommendation #3: To focus RM program marketing messages on opportunities for internships, co-op, retail as a career (leveraging alumni, category management and sales professional certifications, advisory council, location, etc.) in relation to the RM curriculum.

Rationale:

- Student feedback suggests that internship/co-op opportunities and the unique nature of a degree specialized in retail are the most important factors for prospective applicants.
- While more active promotion of program scholarships was recommended in the previous program review, opportunities for financial aid appear to be a secondary concern for prospective students in attempting to identify the right program and may be more effectively highlighted later in the process of converting applicants to enrollments.

Objective:

- Overcoming misperceptions about retail careers have proven challenging for the industry as a whole and thus remains a priority for the RM degree program.
- The relevance of the degree and interest in specific retail careers once individuals are made aware of the opportunities (e.g., buying and merchandising, digital retailing, etc.) is illustrated in part through a high percentage of students who enroll in the RM program via direct entry (transfers from college programs) or working for a short period following high school.
- By developing consistent messaging that highlights the diversity of career possibilities and skills required for innovative retail initiatives, the school may better position the RM degree to improve conversion rates among new applicants and those considering a transfer from other university programs while also strengthening internal retention.

Actions:

- Develop a plan to highlight new retail alumni each year that match the interests stated by students and employer partners in annual surveys.
- Include focus on unique paths within the retail curriculum (i.e., buying, digital) and certifications (e.g., Professional Category Manager, Sales Professional).
- Explore the value of targeted marketing of a degree in retail beyond Ontario and opportunity to reach students considering a change in universities / programs.
- Increase focus on college diploma graduates for “direct entry” paths to the degree.
- Measure popularity of specific career roles/employer brands on social media/website.
- Survey students about top reasons for selecting the RM program and top forms of engagement they experienced prior to accepting their admission offer.

Timeline:

- Develop an initial plan in Summer 2020
- Content creation in July/August
- Begin activating content through online / print channels September through March
- Conduct new student and employer surveys in October
- Review annually in April the effectiveness of all content and plan for new examples to highlight in the following year.

Responsibility for leading initiative:

- Manager, Program Design in consultation with TRSM Marketing & Communications team.

Responsibility for approving recommendation, providing resources and overall monitoring:

- Program Director

Recommendation #4: Propose curriculum change from 45 to 40 credits while presenting suggested paths of study that align with career fields, special topics, or future graduate studies.

Rationale:

- Updating the curriculum to 40 total credits will better align with requirements by other programs in TRSM, increasing flexibility and choice for RM students.
- Informal pathways that may be mapped to the curriculum (examples include Buying & Merchandising, Digital Retail, and Sales Leadership as identified by students and employers).
 - a) Many prospective students consider the RM program due to career aspirations in buying;
 - b) Digital innovation is an area that may be of interest yet often overlooked by prospective students as being part of a retail degree;
 - c) Sales leadership is a growing area within TRSM, and can be a great way to enhance interdisciplinary orientation within this field.
- Within an ever-changing industry, retail job functions, titles and terminology evolve and must be monitored to ensure currency and alignment with curriculum.
- Current students may benefit from clearer suggestions about how courses relate to each other and to prospective career paths or Masters programs.
- The potential to explore and identify one formal area of concentration (e.g., digital retail, sales leadership) that complements the school’s reputation for buying and merchandising may better serve prospective, current and graduating students alike.

Objective:

- Propose a revised curriculum plan that reduces total credits from 45 to 40.
- Outline paths through the RM curriculum that relate to specific career interests. This may include special notation in the Undergraduate Course Calendar to show clusters of courses (e.g. RMG302, RMG400, RMG452, RMG806, RMG909, RMG916 for Buyers and Merchants)
- Explore the opportunity to develop pathways in a field of retail with growing student interest and employer demand.

Actions:

- Submit curriculum change proposal to TRSM Undergraduate Curriculum Committee.
- Review curriculum clusters and alignment to career paths during faculty meeting.
- Conduct iterative research with students, alumni, employers about these paths.
- Actively monitor course enrolments, student interests, and industry needs.
- In addition to the informal paths, identify the potential for one specific area of concentration within the retail degree.

Timeline:

- Review curriculum with Faculty in Spring 2020
- Present revised curriculum plan to UCC in Summer then TRSM Faculty Council in Fall 2020
- Prepare proposal for course calendar submission in October that includes informal paths.
- Further explore potential for one formal concentration in Winter 2021
- Present follow up report to ASC by June 30, 2021.

Responsibility for leading initiative:

- Program Director & Manager, Program Design & Academic Advisor

Responsibility for approving recommendation, providing any resources made necessary by the recommendation, and overall monitoring of the implementation of the recommendation:

- Faculty Dean

Recommendation #5: Explore opportunities for funding to support and sustain the ongoing integration of retail undergraduate students in faculty research projects on an annual basis.

Rationale:

- Faculty in the RM program have proven adept at guiding MScM students to successful completion of a research-based degree.
- The RM Academic Plan and NSSE survey suggests opportunities for integrating more undergraduate students in the research process.
- With select examples of grants being used to hire retail research assistants, this could be expanded if more consistent funding were available.

Objective:

- To identify internal funding within the RM program to support the ongoing integration of undergraduate students in research projects.
- Support Faculty in their pursuit for grants to open opportunities for Undergraduate-based research assistants.

Actions:

- Conduct needs assessment among faculty of the type of research support that is most needed.
- Align needs with potential for undergraduate students to provide relevant support.
- Explore potential for internal funding of student research positions.
- Develop process for faculty to apply / implement retail research projects.
- Identify or create space/process for student researchers and research assistants to work on an on-going basis.
- Invite select undergraduate students to the annual Retail Research Colloquium.

Timeline:

- Needs assessment in faculty meetings Fall 2020.
- Review internal accounts, potential sources of funding – Fall 2020.
- Develop pilot project & process for undergraduate research initiatives.

Responsibility for leading initiative:

- Program Director

Responsibility for approving recommendation, providing resources and overall monitoring:

- Faculty Dean