



**Graduate
Studies**

Office of the Vice-Provost and Dean
Yeates School of Graduate Studies

Final Assessment Report (FAR) and Implementation Plan

Periodic Program Review (PPR)

Graduate Program in Fashion (MA)

Last Updated: November 3, 2021

*Renaming in process

In August 2021, the university announced that it would begin a renaming process to address the legacy of Egerton Ryerson and build a more inclusive future. Let's write the next chapter together.

ryerson.ca/next-chapter

FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

In accordance with the University Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), this final assessment report provides a synthesis of the external evaluation and the internal response and assessments of the graduate program in **Fashion (MA)**. This report identifies the peer review identified 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 report also includes an Implementation Plan that identifies who will be responsible for approving the recommendations set out in the final assessment report; who will be responsible for providing any resources entailed by those recommendations; any changes in organization, policy or governance that will be necessary to meet the recommendations and who will be responsible for acting on those recommendations; and timelines for acting on and monitoring the implementation of those recommendations.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ryerson's MA Fashion program is relatively new (2010), and the only one of its kind in Canada. Welcoming students from a broad array of undergraduate programs, the interdisciplinary and student-focused curriculum draws on the strengths of faculty working from a variety of perspectives, from creative practice to humanities and social science methodologies. The pedagogical framework of the graduate curriculum reflects this diversity of approach. Students emerge with an MA in Fashion which is both broad and expansive, with advanced skills in research methods and critical thinking, as well as an in-depth understanding of fashion as an interdisciplinary and evolving field. Students complete a Major Research Project which allows them to focus their academic development in an area of their choosing—with the option to include a creative and/or practice based component.

Canada has some catch up work to do in terms of post-graduate education in Fashion. Well-established in a U.S. and U.K. context, with a variety of specialist degrees being offered in creative design (MFAs/MDes) and historical/curatorial approaches (typically MAs), Ryerson's competitors have advantages in several areas—most notably in terms of reputation, financial resources and administrative support. In Canada, the graduate-level study of dress history, body politics, textiles and creative practice, apparel design, ethics/sustainability, and fashion business/entrepreneurship is possible, but often accommodated in more traditional academic departments/units, which tend to isolate and divide historical, creative and social science approaches (ie: art history, fine arts, economics, business, psychology/sociology and literary or material culture studies). Ryerson is one of the few universities

that emphasizes (and supports) the integration of theory and practice in the areas of fashion, communication and design. This fact alone underscores the importance and potential growth of Ryerson's Fashion MA (and proposed MDes) in the context of Canadian culture.

Periodic Program Review and Peer Review Team Fashion (MA)

The graduate program in **Fashion**, The Creative School, submitted a Self-Study Report to the Yeates School of Graduate Studies that outlined program descriptions and learning outcomes, an analytical assessment of the program, program data including data from student surveys and the standard data packages. Course outlines and CVs for full-time faculty members were also appended.

Two external and one internal arm's-length reviewers were selected from a set of proposed candidates. The Peer Review Team (PRT) for the Periodic Program Review (PPR) of the graduate program in Fashion consisted of H el ene Day Fraser (Associate Professor, Emily Carr), Dr. Marlis Schweitzer (Associate Professor, York University), and Dr. Izabella Pruska-Oldenhof (Ryerson University).

The PRT site visit was conducted virtually on October 21 to 23, 2020. The visit included interviews with the University and Faculty Administration including the Provost and Vice-President Academic, The Creative School Associate Dean, Vice-Provost and Dean Yeates School of Graduate Studies (YSGS); Associate Dean YSGS, Graduate Program Director of the Graduate Program, and meetings with Faculty, a group of current students, and support staff.

The PRT report was communicated to the Associate Dean, YSGS on January 25, 2021, and the response to the report from graduate program and Dean was communicated on October 15, 2021.

Program Strengths, Weaknesses, and Opportunities

The Peer Review Team identified program strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for program improvement and enhancement, outlined below.

Strengths

The MA Fashion program seeks to offer “cutting-edge graduate level education and training”. Its most impressive strengths (referenced in the self-study) include:

- Its emphasis on interdisciplinary perspectives and emerging research methods drawn from across the social sciences, humanities, and creative arts, with a growing interest in practice-based research
- Its enthusiastic support of students’ diverse research interests; its willingness to invite new approaches to research, including practice-based methods; and its emphasis on student choice and self-expression
- Its efforts to center diversity, inclusion, and sustainability in curricular choices, faculty hires, and student research projects
- The excellence and quality/diversity of faculty research

Weaknesses

The MA Fashion program has thoughtfully identified several weaknesses that require swift attention in order for the program to realize its full potential. These weaknesses include:

- Insufficient funding is the most significant barrier to the program’s future success “both in terms of the operation/running of the program, as well as for student recruitment/admission”. Without improvements to funding, the program will continue to face serious challenges in recruiting and retaining its top applicants. Simply put, the current funding situation threatens the program’s future.
- Unwieldy workloads for full-time faculty, especially tenured faculty who teach in the undergraduate and graduate programs and also carry heavy service loads in addition to their supervisory responsibilities.
- The need to combat negative perceptions (both internally and externally) of fashion studies as an academic discipline and address concerns about fashion’s apparent “unruliness” as a discipline.
- Concerns about the consistency of administrative support and the physical distance between staff offices and teaching/program spaces.
- Limitations about the availability and suitability of teaching and studio space; desire for greater access to equipment and technical support

Opportunities

The MA Fashion program has identified a number of important opportunities to address the weaknesses and related challenges referenced above.

- First and foremost, its status as Canada’s only Masters degree program in Fashion “presents a unique moment for unlocking the potential of post-graduate fashion education in a Canadian context”. The program is ideally placed to lead important conversations in areas such as Critical Fashion Studies, Sustainability, and Social Justice. Recent hires will play a critical role in helping the program realize these opportunities.
- The program recognizes the importance of supporting international students and scholars who will, in turn, enhance the program’s international presence and impact”.
- The program has also identified exciting opportunities to develop new partnerships, support research intensification, and attract external funding through its existing ties to the Centre for Fashion Diversity and Social Change, the open-access Fashion Studies journal and the Fashion Research Collection (FRC)

Summary of PRT Recommendations, Graduate Program and YSGS Responses, and Implementation Plan

A report on the progress of these initiatives will be provided in the Follow-up Report which will be due in one year from the date of Senate approval.

PRT Recommendations	Fashion (MA) Program Response	Action Items/Timelines	Lead/Responsibility	Faculty Dean Response	YSGS Response
Curriculum					
1. Reassess the relationship of the current core courses to guiding principles	This process got underway during Fall/Winter 2020-21 with deliberate incorporation of the guiding principles in all syllabi but broader discussion will occur in the coming years.	Discuss with the Fashion Graduate Curriculum Committee and instructors teaching in 2021/22. Prioritize this discussion for curriculum meetings in 2021/22.	GPD	Agree with plan.	YSGS encourages continuous curriculum improvement and is eager to support the program in doing this. A recommended approach is to do a careful review of the program's intended learning outcomes to ensure they align with the guiding principles of the program followed by a review of the mapping of the core courses to these learning outcomes. The curriculum consultants from the Vice-Provost, Academic, office can assist in this exercise as well.
2. Review learning outcomes and required/ elective course matrix, and, where appropriate, adjust to better bolster this goal.	Agreed and will work towards this recommendation in coming years.	Discuss with the Fashion Graduate Curriculum Committee and instructors teaching in 2021/22. Prioritize this discussion for curriculum meetings in 2021/22.	Chair of Fashion, GPD & Fashion Graduate Curriculum Committee	All course outlines should have learning outcomes per policy.	This recommendation is closely tied to recommendation #1. YSGS is supportive of any action taken to address this recommendation. The program is advised to review the categories of curriculum changes defined in Policy 127 and their approval steps early in this process and consult with YSGS as needed.

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<p>3. Create a clear matrix for tenured and pre-tenure faculty, and sessional instructors to work and build from will help clarify: student trajectories through the program; student/faculty expectations of deliverables; identify any faculty workload distribution issues and assure that program's guiding principles are met and built on effectively.</p>	<p>Agreed and will work towards this recommendation in coming years.</p>	<p>Discuss during the Fashion Graduate Curriculum Committee meetings in 2021/22.</p>	<p>Chair of Fashion, GPD & Graduate Program Council</p>	<p>Agree with plan. Implementation of "First Day to First Sabbatical" – a new Creative School guide and support initiative for pre-tenure faculty, in place as of Sept 2021.</p>	<p>The workload of instructors and supervisors in the program and their roles and responsibilities are outside the purview of YSGS, but YSGS commends the program for making efforts to address this.</p>
<p>4. Continue developing courses in sustainability; the introduction of such courses should not hinge on the success of an MDes proposal.</p>	<p>Agreed and will work towards this recommendation in coming years.</p>	<p>Discuss during the Fashion Graduate Curriculum Committee meetings in 2021/22.</p>	<p>Chair of Fashion, GPD & Fashion Graduate Curriculum Committee</p>	<p>Curriculum is the purview of the program.</p>	<p>The development and addition of courses is governed by Policy 127. YSGS recommends that this be tied to the work for recommendations #1 and #2 above and that the program is aware of the types of curriculum modifications defined in policy and the procedures for review and approval of any proposed modifications.</p>
<p>5. Engage with areas of graduate studies at Ryerson to assess means of potentially ensuring the MA Fashion program's guiding principles are embedded within overall</p>	<p>Agreed and will work towards this recommendation in coming years.</p>	<p>Discuss with the Fashion Graduate Curriculum Committee and instructors teaching in 2021/22. Prioritize this discussion for curriculum meetings in 2021/22.</p>	<p>Chair of Fashion, GPD & Fashion Graduate Curriculum Committee</p>	<p>Agree that this aligns with sub-Rec 2.</p>	<p>This recommendation overlaps with recommendation #1 above. Refer to the YSGS response to that recommendation, above.</p>

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GDLES – Master’s Degree-Level Expectations.					
6. Consider the relationship of specific local needs to broader global trends in future planning conversations. Key questions include: What are the needs in Ontario? What are the value sets and concerns pertaining to the local Fashion Industry context? Who are the stakeholders in this region? How does this link to the broader global context of the industry? Of research? How does/ might insight from graduate studies in Fashion respond to needs in other sectors?	Agreed and will plan to discuss with relevant stakeholders	Develop plan for outreach by the end of 2021/22.	Chair of Fashion, GPD, GPA, and Fashion Graduate Admissions Committee	Agree with plan.	YSGS is supportive of the proposed action plan for outreach to stakeholders. This exercise will help tailor the intended program learning outcomes that will be reviewed when addressing recommendation #1.
7. Consult employment data and other information gathered from alumni when making decisions around programming, messaging, and post-graduation support.	Agreed and plan to develop a systematic gathering of employment data needed	Develop plan with GPA to acquire such information by the end of 2021/22.	GPD & GPA	This has already begun. Programs Manager in consultation with GPAs and GPDs in all graduate programs.	YSGS is happy to provide any support it can in reaching out to alumni and gathering any other relevant information.
Workload					

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<p>8. Revisit expectations for faculty and discuss strategies to move towards greater equity with respect to the following: roles and contribution across undergraduate and graduate curriculum in Fashion; supervisory responsibilities; and expectations of peer mentorship of pre-tenure faculty.</p>	<p>The program agrees that this is a worthwhile goal but is hindered by the ratio of tenured vs. probationary faculty in our program. We hope to work with the Faculty Dean's office to find ways to improve this by hiring 2 senior faculty to achieve this recommendation.</p>	<p>By the end of the 2021/22 school year.</p>	<p>Chair of Fashion, GDP & DHC</p>	<p>We plan to do this at a faculty wide level so look forward to working closely with the school to develop more guidance for the discipline.</p>	<p>YSGS provides guidelines on graduate supervisory roles and responsibilities, but other matters of this recommendation are outside the purview of YSGS.</p>
<p>9. Conduct a workload audit for all staff (administrative and technical) in light of COVID-19 challenges as well as new demands associated with recent curricular changes to the undergraduate Fashion program and proposed plans for the MDes.</p>	<p>The program agrees that this is a worthwhile goal and will explore how to conduct this audit with support from our GPA.</p>	<p>By the end of the 2021/22 school year.</p>	<p>Chair of Fashion, GPD & GPA</p>	<p>We will look into this more closely with the school.</p>	<p>This is outside the purview of YSGS but YSGS is supportive of any ways to improve the workload associated with delivering the program.</p>
<p>10. Consider whether adjusting the duration of the degree might alleviate the heavy supervisory burden and appeal to students looking for a shorter period of study (3 semesters vs. 5 semesters).</p>	<p>The Fashion MA GPPR team disagrees with this recommendation. As discussed above, the supervisory burden in our RFA faculty will not be alleviated, but exasperated by a shortened period of study.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Agree with program's assessment of structure.</p>	<p>YSGS agrees with the program's response.</p>

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Partnerships and Professional Opportunities					
11. Seek out longer-term partnerships with community organizations and other groups that align with the program's guiding principles, specifically its emphasis on inclusion, decolonization, and sustainability, in order to enhance opportunities for networking, professional skills development, and research exchange.	Agreed and will explore further.	Ongoing	Chair of Fashion, GPD, & larger School of Fashion and Fashion MA community.	The Faculty will support this initiative where feasible.	YSGS will support any efforts made by the program in addressing this recommendation.
12. Pursue opportunities for paid research internship programs such as MITACs to offer the meaningful experience and financial support students are seeking.	Agreed and will explore further.	Ongoing	Chair of Fashion, GPD, Associate Dean SRC and Internship instructor, along with larger School of Fashion and Fashion MA community.	Agree to support where feasible.	YSGS will support the program in their efforts to pursue paid internships through MITAC.
13. Consider expectations for internships required of students without prior training and experience in the fashion industry.	The Fashion MA GPPR team disagrees with this recommendation. Internships are optional and if students decide to pursue an internship, they can select internships appropriate to their background and interests. We do not want to limit or	N/A	N/A	Agree with program's perspective and knowledge of their own field/context.	YSGS is in agreement with the program's response.

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	impose any control over these opportunities.				
14. Augment internship and RA offerings to address student desires to network and build toward meaningful post-graduation career opportunities.	Agreed and will explore further.	By the end of the 2021/22 school year.	Chair of Fashion, GPD, & larger School of Fashion and Fashion MA community.	Associate Dean plan to provide laddered research and practice training for RAs is in progress.	YSGS is willing to support this in any way it can.
15. Track information about student involvement as RAs or GAs on faculty research projects for future planning purposes.	Agreed.	By the end of the 2021/22 school year.	GPA and UG Program Administrator for GAs and GPD/Faculty for RAs	As above #14. These data are part of the assessment plan of this strategy.	YSGS is willing to support this in any way it can.
16. Consider one of more of the following to address desires for enhanced networking and professional skills development opportunities:	See rows below.	See rows below.	See rows below.	See rows below.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hosting an annual or biannual fashion studies symposium for graduate students and faculty from across Canada; this could be aligned with the launch of new Fashion Studies issues; 	Agreed but would require further financial and institutional support.	By the end of the 2021/22 school year.	GPD to discuss with Chair, Dean, Associate Dean of Graduate Studies and Fashion Studies co-editors.	Faculty (AD GRAD, AD SRC) will support where feasible.	YSGS is willing to provide guidance and support where it can.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborating with graduate students to host a fashion studies speaker series, with talks and workshops scheduled throughout the year; 	Agreed but would require further financial and institutional support.	Ongoing	GPD to discuss with Chair, Dean, Associate Dean of Graduate Studies.	Programs can and do set aside funds for this purpose. Associate Dean also runs faculty-wide speaker series.	YSGS agrees with this recommendation and notes that several other programs have an invited speaker series.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing “artist-in-residence” opportunities to recognize the value of creative arts methodologies and align with the program’s emphasis on decolonization, inclusion and sustainability. 	The Fashion MA GPPR team disagrees with this recommendation. The cost of implementing this recommendation does not justify the impact for a relatively small number of students pursuing creative practices. In addition, we have many faculty able to provide support in this area.	N/A	N/A	Agree with program.	This recommendation is outside the purview of YSGS but it respects the program’s view on this.
MDes Proposal					
17. Reevaluate the feasibility of building towards an MDes at this historical moment; consider waiting until faculty complement can alleviate intense pressure that current faculty are under.	Agreement	To be re-evaluated only if a Senior Tenured Hire, who could lead M.Des initiative, is provided.	GPD to discuss with Chair, Dean, Associate Dean of Graduate Studies, Vice Provost of Academics and School of Fashion and Fashion MA communities.	To be determined if/when such a position materializes.	YSGS is happy to support the development of this and notes that the policies and procedures for the development of new programs can be found in Policy 112.
18. Undertake an audit of all available spaces in the early	Agreement	See above.	As above.	As above.	YSGS agrees that this is need before developing a new program.

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stages of developing an MDes proposal.					
19. Maximize the potential for curricular and supervisory sharing across the MA and MDes while also ensuring that the program identities are distinct.	Agreement	See above.	As above.	As above.	While the sharing of curricular and supervisory resources across two programs is a worthy arrangement, care should be taken to ensure that each program's intended learning outcomes are adequately met by the respective curricula.
MDes Proposal					
20. Prioritize hiring 1-2 new faculty members at the senior level (Associate or higher) to address significant workload challenges.	Agreement	GPD to discuss with Chair and Dean	GPD, Chair School of Fashion and Departmental Hiring Committee	Note that decision on the rank of a hire is a provostial decision.	This is outside the purview of YSGS.
21. Revisit the workload of the graduate program administrator and consider reducing the number of programs they serve.	Agreed.	To discuss with Associate Dean.	GPD, Chair School of Fashion	The university provides for .5 GPA only.	It is standard across the University for each program to receive 0.5-FTE GPA support, but when there are two closely aligned programs (such as a master's and doctoral program in the same discipline) then a full-time GPA position is allocated to support both programs.
22. Hire a dedicated support person with fashion studies knowledge to assist with	Agreement especially in light of above limitations in 21	GPD to discuss with Chair, Dean, Associate Dean	GPD, Chair School of Fashion	The Faculty team can assist with this plan,	This is outside the purview of YSGS.

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recruitment and professional skills development.				however, it is not a dedicated position.	
23. Hire a dedicated Research Officer to support faculty grant writing and alleviate expectation that much of this work will be assumed by already overworked senior faculty.	Agreed but this is unrealistic considering our current and foreseeable financial resources.	N/A	N/A	This is not under the purview of this review. AD SRC and many other Faculty resources support grant writing.	This is outside the purview of YSGS.
24. Hire a full-time technician to monitor the MA studio/lab and support student projects.	Disagree. There is not enough creative activity to warrant a full-time technician.	N/A	N/A	Agree with program.	This is outside the purview of YSGS.
Graduate student funding					
25. Critically reexamine graduate student funding in order to improve program abilities to attract and retain top applicants and thereby manifest a shift in Ryerson's research culture more broadly.	Agreement but progress has been made in guaranteed GAships with revised UG curriculum and it ties in with fluctuating Ont. Government funding. We would like to further implement scholarships for BIPOC students, for which institutional support will be needed.	GPD to discuss with Chair, Dean, Associate Dean	GPD, Chair School of Fashion	Additional research assistantships are in the works. Other resources depend on Govt funding.	YSGS has been advocating for increased institutional funding of graduate students and has made progress in obtained additional Ryerson Graduate Scholarships and established scholarships for black and indigenous students. It has also transferred all of its carry-forward funding to graduate programs across the university. YSGS will continue to advocate for increased graduate student funding.

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26. Provide greater support in marketing and recruitment for individual programs.	Agreement	GPD to discuss with Chair, Dean, Associate Dean	GPD, GPA, Chair School of Fashion	This support is ongoing. Faculty MARCOMM team can assist. GPA/Programs Manager can help coordinate.	YSGS encourages the program to work with the Faculty communications team in addressing this recommendation, while coordinating with the university-wide initiatives at YSGS in outreach and marketing.
Space					
27. Allocate a dedicated exhibition space to the MA Fashion Program.	Ongoing	GPD to discuss with Chair, Dean, Associate Dean	GPD, Chair School of Fashion, Dean's Office	Dedicated program space is currently not available but will explore pop-up and shared spaces for student work.	This is outside the purview of YSGS.
28. Provide greater opportunities for MA students to exhibit research projects (dedicated exhibition space).	Ongoing	GPD to discuss with Chair, Dean, Associate Dean	GPD, Chair School of Fashion, Dean's Office	The Catalyst and the Innovation Studio spaces are part of the revolving exhibition spaces available to graduate students.	This is outside the purview of YSGS.
Future program reviews					
29. Schedule time for PRTs to observe classes for both in-person and remote visits.	According to the Associate Dean this is not part of the PRT process	N/A	N/A	Agreed.	There is a structured agenda template for PRT site visits that falls under the University's Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP). The IQAP program undergoes regular review and updates. Any changes are reviewed

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					and approved by Quality Council. YSGS will take this into consideration in future reviews of its IQAP related processes.
30. Consider the simultaneous review of undergraduate and graduate programs so PRTs can offer a more holistic view of programs.	Disagree. The undergraduate and graduate program are each in flux and do not correlate.	N/A	N/A	Agreed.	Policy 126 allows for simultaneous review of undergraduate and graduate programs that are in the same School/Department, but YSGS notes that there is no obligation to conduct the reviews simultaneously.
31. Ask graduate programs to include supplementary material on internships, MRP titles, course outlines for elective courses, and data on courses taken, as part of future self-study packages.	Agreed. This information would be beneficial.	GPD to discuss process with GPA.	GPD and GPA.	Agreed.	YSGS notes that some of these items are included in self-studies by programs but will ensure that programs include any such elements where it is appropriate for the program's review.