

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY PERIODIC PROGRAM REVIEW BACHELOR OF INTERIOR DESIGN

The School of Interior Design is housed within the Faculty of Communication & Design at Ryerson University. The School offers a four-year Bachelor of Interior Design which is accredited by CIDA, the Council for Interior Design Accreditation. The School's mission is to educate students for the dynamic, complex and demanding practice of interior design in a learning environment that balances the theoretical and the practical, the experiential and the conceptual. Graduates are prepared for leadership in the interior design profession through understanding and consideration of the technological, aesthetic, ideological, environmental, cultural and social dimensions of the built environment.

The curricular focus is for graduating students to:

- understand and interpret the relationships between the natural and built environments and the complexity and variety of human responses to them;
- recognize the broad impact of design interventions and develop responsible design solutions that respond to issues of ecological sustainability and global awareness;
- engage in critical thinking and research through the systematic application of the design process;
- respond to design challenges creatively, holistically, and spatially;
- translate design concepts into resolved spaces with an intended quality and character demonstrating entry-level skill and understanding of detailing and materials;
- articulate and defend the conceptual basis of their work;
- show an ability to effectively communicate design ideas using the graphic vocabulary of the profession;
- address clients' needs while designing for the health, safety, and welfare of all hypothetical users by applying regulations, codes, laws, and standards; and
- recognize and understand the extent of an interior designer's professional responsibilities and commitments.

The program consists of forty-two courses: thirty-one core, three professional electives, two professionally-related electives and six liberal studies. The curriculum has been mapped to the CIDA (Council for Interior Design) matrix of standards and to UDLES (Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations). There are twelve full-time faculty and sixteen part-time instructors. There has been a 44% increase in the number of students since 2001 with 370 students currently enrolled in the program.

Admission requirements for the School of Interior Design requires an OSSD or equivalent, with six Grade 12 U/M courses, including English, Grade 11 U or M or Grade 12 U Mathematics and one additional Grade 12 U or M course from a selected list. Students should select Physics (Grade 11 or higher) and the Art option in Grades 11 and 12 if available. Preference may be given to applicants who have included History or Visual Arts/Art History in their Grade 12 U/M studies. Subject to competition, candidates may be required to present averages/grades above the minimum. All applicants to the program are required to participate in a portfolio review consisting of an interview, a writing test and a drawing test.

The School of Interior Design has established three professional practice internship modules: a preparation course, a 400-hour internship in the summer between third and fourth year, and a fourth-year professional practice course. The internship program is now in its ninth year. Students may also take advantage of Ryerson's international exchange programs with opportunities at ten institutions and with new partnerships being sought. As well, changes to the curriculum now enable Interior Design students to effectively take a Minor from select programs.

The Self Study Report and the observations and comments made by the Peer Review Team reveal that the curriculum is relevant and up-to-date. Ryerson's Interior Design program fulfills the CIDA criteria as an accredited school and complies with all twelve standards required by that body. To introduce students to more interdisciplinary thinking within a logical and global context, the School actively pursues outreach opportunities with real clients and a community focus. The majority of courses at the School also have an experiential component, including work/study internship, design studios, creative construction in the workshop, field trips, portfolio creation, laboratories, problem-based learning and case-study analysis.

The School of Interior Design is actively pursuing a new collaborative degree and minor in Fibre and Textiles with the Schools of Theatre, Fashion and Graphic Communication Management. While the School currently offers liberal studies electives in art history for the university, it is pursuing the establishment of art history minors, interior design minors and a module for the Creative Industries program.

The School's location in Toronto is attractive to prospective students and the use of the resources of the city is one of the strengths of the program. The School has design leaders on its Advisory Council. The alumni, many of whom practice in Toronto at important interior design firms, return to the school as guest critics as well as to open up their offices for students to visit. This strong connection to alumni also enables students to obtain summer internships and ongoing work during the school year. An active "Lunch and Learn" series speaks to the strength of the school's relationships with industry. At these weekly sessions, manufacturers, designers, service and other industry representatives visit the school to introduce students to their products and projects.

Faculty are engaged in scholarly, research and creative activities (SRC) that are innovative and often integrated into advanced interior design studios; the SRC also enhances the reputation of the school among other scholars, students and the design community. Although some faculty members are engaged and productive in their SRC endeavours there are faculty whose real strength lies in teaching rather than SRC.

Graduate satisfaction with the program has fluctuated over the years. For example, only 38.9% of the class of 2000 was either satisfied or very satisfied compared with the 71.6% of graduates across the Faculty of Communication and Design. By 2006 the situation had improved to 78.5%. In 2009, however, the trend reversed with 47.6% expressing a satisfied or very satisfied view. With a recession underway, many students once again questioned whether they were prepared for entry into the practice of interior design. In addition, dissatisfaction within the graduating class was noted due to changes in focus within the curriculum in order to adhere to new CIDA standards.

Building Information Modelling (BIM) and Revit (a software program) are required in some areas of professional practice. Using the computer as a design generator has been given low priority as the School worked to keep its communications curriculum current and relevant to the changing needs of practise. The school has not had a dedicated computer lab since the shared FCAD lab was moved to Kerr Hall; it has subsisted on 'hand-me-downs' from that lab, placed in the design studio and Design Centre. As well, the school does not have an IT technician.

As part of its Developmental Plan the school has developed the goals of: building on high-quality interior design practice in Canada through exemplary education, current professional practice, acknowledgement of and engagement with societal issues, and diverse critical approaches to design; expanding multiple approaches to teaching and learning including new initiatives for engaging the first-year student and the fourth-year student; establishing a Master of Interior Design Program; promoting

excellence through SRC including strategic hiring for two or three positions that are currently vacant; engaging students in diverse cultural and professional communities; and making current students' achievements public by means of the year-end show and publishing the work of the studios both electronically and in print format.

The Peer Review Team (PRT) Report provides further insights into the program. Members of the PRT were Tiiu Poldma (PhD, IDEC), Université de Montréal, and Rachel Pike (ASID, IDEC, IIDA), Wentworth Institute of Technology. Strengths identified by the PRT demonstrate that: the program identity is well articulated with a clear mission and goals; there is excellent student integration both within the school and with one another; clear benchmarks are set and rigour is imposed with students from the outset in terms of program expectations; and the program gives excellent value for the tuition paid. Facilities are generally excellent and the emphasis on craft and building materiality is a plus and would be the envy of many schools of this caliber; students are given ample opportunities for experiential learning and the program promotes the studio as a fundamental component of learning where design process is experientially taught. Problem-based learning is at the heart of many of the design studio projects; there has been an effort to develop a diversity of program options, including the initiative to create interdisciplinary electives; the Interior Design program clearly complies with the high standards set by CIDA and also with Ryerson curriculum standards; the program has a strong identity and reputation for high quality in North America; the full time faculty engage in scholarly activity and most are dedicated to advancing interior design as a discipline through an examination of teaching and learning processes; and the program has high standards and quality in terms of curriculum and expectations of both professors and students.

The Peer Review Team Report identifies some weaknesses such as: the strong emphasis on studio projects developed from the outset as a set curriculum leaves very little room for student decision-making within the earlier stages of their development; the extremely complex nature and smaller scale of the final project does not allow for a freer range of development by the student or the development of critical thinking skills; the few NCIDQ qualified professors; the core curriculum does not allow for extensive student exploration of allied or interdisciplinary alternatives that would complement their interests; and the low number of electives. The report also highlights the high student-teacher ratios that are well above the standard within most design and architecture programs of a similar caliber, teaching loads that are considered very high for a program of this type and caliber in North America, and the facilities which appear to be understaffed in some areas such as the workshop and could be a safety issue. The Interior Design building was renovated to accommodate a student population of approximately 250 and current enrollment is approximately 370. The emphasis on professional development limits students' exposure to more critical inquiry based modes of thought and to the research skills required for academic advancement into masters or doctoral levels.

Priorities identified by the PRT to be considered include reviewing heavy teaching loads, high student to faculty ratios, lack of support personnel, constantly changing technology, and the lack of feedback available to the administration and faculty concerning student assessment of teaching.

The program response to the Peer Review Team report states that proposed curriculum changes to the fourth year major project may address the PRT's remarks regarding balancing the need for graduates with a professional emphasis and providing students with more critical inquiry-based modes of thought and research skills required for advancement into master or doctoral levels. Current students who do choose to pursue graduate studies have been highly successful in a variety of programs in North America and beyond. The changes proposed for the fourth year project combine the length of a full-year project while maintaining the studio model rather than the thesis model (the latter model to be part of the planned graduate program). More courses could be added to the published list in the PR table to address the issue of breadth for all students. The new undergraduate curriculum model approved by

Senate should allow for greater student choice and help prepare students for an increasingly multidisciplinary professional world. The call for greater choice has to be balanced with maintaining the program's distinctiveness. The extensive curriculum adjustments and initiatives undertaken by the School cannot by themselves solve systemic problems of too-large classes, decreasing student contact, too many stand-up hours impacting negatively on the faculty's ability to negotiate teaching, service and SRC and inevitable faculty burn-out. Remaining among the top three interior design schools in the world should be a priority for the university. Investment in upgrades to facilities and additional staff are required and sharing of technical staff with other FCAD Schools is not a long-term solution. Safety in the workshop is currently being addressed by better training of lab monitors and a more thorough shop orientation for every first year student. The School has also created a faculty coordinator position for the workshop to act as a liaison between faculty and the workshop staff. To keep current with technology the School has hired CUPE instructors who are still intimately involved on a day-to-day basis with the profession. However this practice has increased the knowledge gap between the full-time faculty and the students and the CUPE instructors. Full-time faculty should be trained in new technology as well. This is especially crucial given the fact that computer technology is now being increasingly used as a design tool rather than as a technical or communication tool.

Ryerson's revised program review policy (IQAP) requires that Faculty Deans also provide a response to the PRT report. The Dean of the Faculty of Communication & Design recommends: that the School develop a five-year plan to update its technological infrastructure and keep it at levels of currency required by the industry; that faculty be encouraged to familiarize themselves with the latest technologies; that the School pursue its nascent plan to develop a Master program in Interior Design with greater urgency and it is suggested that the next two faculty hires have credentials consistent with offering graduate-level education; and that the School consider introducing challenging "general interest courses" in Interior Design that might attract students from other Schools and Faculties on campus. As well, the Dean suggests: that the School consider introducing a broader range of professionally-related electives; that the University hire an IT/Lab technician, subject to available funding, to reduce the student-to-staff ratio, to counteract possible safety hazards resulting from overcrowding and to free up faculty from additional supervision of students and reduce burnout; and that the University dedicate one of its future faculty hires to Interior Design, subject to available funding, ideally for the 2013/14 hiring cycle. The Dean indicates that the recommendations should be addressed in a three to five year time frame.

Ryerson's Academic Standards Committee's (ASC) assessment of the Periodic Program Review of the Bachelor of Interior Design notes that while the School of Interior Design has mapped the content of its courses to UDLEs, it has by-passed a vital step on the curriculum development pathway that being the definition of program curriculum goals and the mapping of these both to course content and to the UDLEs statements. In light of this, the ASC recommends that a full UDLEs analysis of the program be completed and presented in a follow-up report. While the School has identified a number of possible reasons why graduate satisfaction with the Interior Design program is low, ASC recommends that the sources of this low satisfaction be further explored. In addition, the ASC asks that the School identify additional strategies that might improve the program's performance in this context and present these in a follow-up report.

The Interior Design Periodic Program Review was approved by Ryerson University's Senate on January 24, 2012. A response to the Academic Standards Committee recommendations is due June, 2013.