

Communication and Cultural Studies Joint Graduate Program (MA and PhD) York University and Ryerson University

Cyclical Program Review – 2009 to 2016

Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan

Reported/Approved:

- **York University Joint-Committee on Quality Assurance: May 2018**
- **Ryerson University Senate: May 2018**

Program Description

The Joint Master's and Doctoral Program in Communication and Culture at York and Ryerson is a unique partnership with two universities combining expertise and opportunities for advanced study related to media and cultural technologies in practice and theory, as well as communication politics and policy. Three fields of study are offered: Media and Culture; Politics and Policy; Technology in Practice. The first students were admitted in 2000.

The Program offers an innovative two-year Master's program, full-time or part-time, which allows students to enter from a wide diversity of academic backgrounds and professional experiences. The MA program offers unique options for combining academic and professional work that promotes the integration of theory-building, media practice, and policy through independent research. Master's students can elect one of three options for completing their degrees: by thesis (+ 8 courses), by project (+ 8 courses) or by major research paper (MRP + 9 courses).

The MA program focuses on exposing students to the following:

- Designing and conducting research that sheds new light on issues and problems in theory, empirical studies, and professional practices.
- Reporting research in a variety of conventional and non-traditional research and creative methods.
- Participating in course-based seminar discussions with faculty, to delve into the implications of current and emerging themes of interest.
- An option of undertaking field placements (with public, private or community organizations) that provide the experiential-learning opportunities commensurate with the standards of a graduate course.

The PhD program, which can be pursued on a part- or full-time basis, is a research intensive, theoretically and methodologically grounded offering that emphasizes the practices, processes and technologies for elevating understanding of contemporary mediated cultures. Research opportunities are

supported by a large complement of faculty from across Ryerson and York, who bring a breadth of perspectives and experiences. PhD candidates must complete six one-term courses: three PhD core courses and appropriate courses in a major and minor field. Upon completion of courses, candidates must pass qualifying examinations and present an acceptable dissertation proposal. The dissertation must make an original contribution to knowledge in the field.

The PhD program focuses on exposing students to the following:

- Providing experience and training in advanced research and developing critical and analytical skills.
- Preparing candidates for a career in teaching, or research in cultural industries or non-profit organizations.
- Providing a broad knowledge of the fields of Communication Studies and Cultural Studies with an emphasis on two of the program's three fields (Media and Culture, Policy and Practice and Technology in Practice).
- Facilitating the acquisition of autonomy in conducting research, through the dissertation as well as such avenues as conference papers, scholarly publications, policy consulting, and creative exhibitions.

An overview of the recent registrations, enrollments, and degrees awarded is provided in the table below.

Communications and Culture	Registration (new intake) 2015/16	Enrolment FTES 2015/16	Degrees Awarded 2016
Masters	15	37	36
PhD	12	59	11

Reviewers appointed by the Vice-Provost Academic, York University and the Associate Dean of Students and Programs, Yeates School of graduate Studies, Ryerson University:

Dr. Brenda Austin-Smith, Associate Professor and Head of Department, English Film and Theatre, University of Manitoba

Dr. Darin Barney, Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Programs, Art History & Communication Studies, McGill University

Dr. Annie Bunting, Associate Professor, Law & Society, York University

Dr. Kamal Al-Solaylee, Associate Professor, School of Journalism, Ryerson University

Cyclical Program Review Process

The self-study report was the result of a year-long process of reflective evaluation that engaged the faculty and student members of the program, in confidential and open forums, and through qualitative and quantitative surveying. This process commenced in May 2015 and ended in August 2016

with the writing of the Self Study Report. The program also used the occasion of the program evaluation to connect with all MA and PhD alumni for the first time in the program's 15-year existence.

Materials Provided Prior to Site Visit

- Self-study Report - Joint MA & PhD Graduate Program between York University and Ryerson University in Communication and Culture. Review of the Period 2009-2016. Submitted Jointly: 15 August 2016.
- Decanal Agenda of Concerns: Communication and Culture Graduate Program -- J.J. McMurtry Associate Dean (Programs) York University (December 18, 2016)
- Faculty CVs, Communication and Culture Graduate Program, York University and Ryerson University.
- Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents' Undergraduate and Graduate Degree Level Expectations.
- Revised Memorandum of Understanding on the administration of the Joint MA/PhD program in Communication and Culture Between Ryerson University and York University (27 October 2011).
- Academic Policy, Planning and Research Committee University Academic Plan 2010- 2015: Enhancing Academic Quality in a Globalized World Senate of York University.

Site Visit: January 11- 13, 2017

The site visit for the Communications Studies program and the York/Ryerson Joint Program in Communication and Culture spanned three days and took place on both the York University and Ryerson University campuses.

The reviewers began with a meeting on January 11, 2017 with Alice Pitt, Vice-Provost Academic and Barbara Crow, Dean of Graduate Studies. Thursday morning began with a meeting with graduate faculty members, followed by meetings with the York Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies (LAPS) Associate Dean of Graduate Studies and Research, Sandra Whitworth, and the ComCult Executive, the GPD York Steven Bailey and the GPD Ryerson, Paul Moore. During lunch the reviewers met with graduate students at York.

The afternoon at Ryerson began with a formal welcome by Marsha Moshe, Interim Vice-Provost Academic, Jennifer Mactavish, Vice-Provost and Dean of the Yeates School of Graduate Studies (YSGS), and Anthony Bonato, Associate Dean, Students and Programs of YSGS. Meetings with Research Chairs and faculty members followed. The reviewers also met with Ryerson librarians and graduate students and toured the Ryerson facilities, including the Arts Collaboratory.

Outcome:

Ryerson University:

The Final Assessment Report submitted to Ryerson University Senate in May 2018. A report on the activities outlined in the Final Assessment Report will be due one year after the approval of the Senate.

York University:

The Joint-Committee on Quality Assurance concluded that the responses and plans adequately addressed the review recommendations. Progress on the recommendations will be included in the Follow-up Report due November 2019.

The next cyclical program review will begin in the Fall of 2023.

Strengths:

The Review Report cited clarity of program objectives, quality and dedication of faculty and staff, and the significant scholarly achievements of the program's students as notable strengths of the Communications and Culture program.

Areas for Enhancement

The reviewers' recommendations are in two broad categories: curricular and administrative/financial with detailed recommendations in both. The reviewers indicated that there should be clarification of the Technology in Practice field. Detailed responses from both York University and Ryerson University follow.

Combined Ryerson/York Reviewer Recommendations, Responses and Implementation Plan

Since the program is a joint MA and PhD program offered by Ryerson University and York University, this section combines responses and reflection from both York University and Ryerson. Ryerson University responded to the recommendations and responses, divided into two broad categories. The role of Yeates School of Graduate Studies is to provide direct commentary on academic matters, as well as administrative and financial matters.

Recommendations related to the harmonization of student funding opportunities at York and at Ryerson are not addressed as they are beyond the purview of the program. In addition, it should be noted that the governing procedures over hiring differ and cannot be harmonized. Both universities commit to ongoing collaboration on this innovative and highly successful program.

Reviewer Recommendations, Responses and Implementation Plan

For simplicity, responses (as well as a recap of the review recommendations and program responses) are provided in the form of tables.

Academic Recommendations

!

Recommendation	Program and Institutional (YSGS and LAPS) Response	Lead and Proposed Action	Proposed Timeline
Clarify field description of “Technology in Practice”.	<p>ComCult response Agreed, in addition to planned curricular evaluation and redesign of electives more widely.</p> <p>YSGS response YSGS supports the program-level response.</p> <p>LA&PS response We are in favour of this clarity and feel that it may help make connections between changes at the undergraduate level and at the graduate level as well as make the program more appealing to applicants of a particular type. A review of other fields may also be useful at this time.</p>	<p>Executive of Communication and Culture Program</p> <p>Convene a committee to revise existing descriptions as well as clearly articulate research creation deliverables, expectations and guidelines for MA & PhD. Work to be based on MA research creation guidelines and review of comparable programs externally.</p>	<p>S2018- Committee to be created.</p> <p>Fall 2018- Preliminary Report to ComCult Executive and discussion</p> <p>W2019- Changes to be adopted by ComCult Executive.</p>

Recommendation	Program and Institutional (YSGS and LAPS) Response	Lead and Proposed Action	Proposed Timeline
<p>Exec-Council & Faculty should develop strategy to address declining applications, especially to the MA, reflecting evolving identity, strengths and aspirations.</p>	<p>ComCult response Agreed, existing efforts can be enhanced, and wider consultation with faculty would assist.</p> <p>YSGS response YSGS supports the program-level response. YSGS will also convene a discussion with the interdisciplinary Graduate Program Directors at Ryerson University to explore how it can support recruitment efforts.</p> <p>LA&PS response We are in support of the development of a strategy to address declining applications in the Program. A review of "competitor programs" may be helpful in developing a response and strategy.</p>	<p>GPD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Internal review/update of public facing communication assets, including websites and social media feeds. b. Discuss recruitment strategies with other interdisciplinary grad programs. c. Conduct targeted recruitment pilot project: GA/RA linked to specific faculty member to be advertised externally. d. Meet with faculty to discuss more targeted recruitment, work on setting up additional targeted recruitment programs next year and process going forward. e. Review competitor programs offerings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Communication assets: updated website and new social media strategy by W2019. b. Interdisciplinary grad program discussion by F2018. c. Targeted recruitment pilot project by Sping 2018. d. Meet with faculty to plan additional/future targeted recruitment by F2018.

Recommendation	Program and Institutional (YSGS and LAPS) Response	Lead and Proposed Action	Proposed Timeline
<p>Convene a Joint “Task Force” with York and Ryerson officers to address structural barriers to fulsome participation in the program’s supervision, service and teaching.</p>	<p>ComCult response Agreed, unreservedly. Systematic planning, with greater imperatives or incentives for interdisciplinary participation is urgent.</p> <p>YSGS response YSGS agrees that interdisciplinary programs, including ComCult, face challenges in securing faculty participation to meet their teaching, supervision, and service needs. YSGS notes that these issues have been formally recognized at Ryerson University. For example, the Senate Task Force on Interdisciplinary Programs released its final report in December 2013. The Provost’s response to that report was issued in May 2015. Nonetheless, YSGS agrees that further action is needed, particularly given the unique challenges ComCult faces as a joint program with York University. YSGS notes that active efforts are ongoing to address challenges related to supervision, teaching, and service in interdisciplinary programs at Ryerson. YSGS supports a meeting between ComCult’s GPDs and the responsible Associate Deans at both universities to discuss these issues.</p> <p>LA&PS response There is general agreement that participation in joint programs needs review and renewal in a structured way. Other interdisciplinary programs within York review faculty participation on a regular basis and we recommend some sort of structured review on an ongoing basis to find out both why this is an issue as well as what the faculty believes would be productive responses to this issue.</p>	<p>GPD, with Dean’s offices</p> <p>Convene meeting to discuss the recommendations of the peer review team. Also, there should be a regularized review of the participation of faculty in the programs and discussion of possible responses to these issues.</p>	<p>F2018, have held meeting to discuss next steps.</p>

Recommendation	Program and Institutional (YSGS and LAPS) Response	Lead and Proposed Action	Proposed Timeline
<p>Increased diversity and equity in the curriculum and supervisory faculty membership, achieved by better employment of existing faculty, new faculty recruiting, cross-listing and other cross-appointments, including dedicated hiring for the grad program.</p>	<p>ComCult response Agreed, with first reparative steps underway, and new faculty recently appointed members of the program.</p> <p>YSGS response YSGS supports the program’s efforts to appoint new faculty currently at York and Ryerson that address the identified areas of need. YSGS also acknowledges the arguments for an increased number of cross-appointed faculty, either through new faculty recruiting or the secondment of existing faculty. YSGS notes, however, that these appointments need to be considered in the context of departmental- and faculty-level planning. The appointment of new faculty is outside of the purview of YSGS. Working with the interdisciplinary GPDs, YSGS will coordinate the development of a proposal for increased cross-appointments in Ryerson’s interdisciplinary programs, including ComCult. This proposal will be presented to the Provost during the 2017-2018 academic year (Note: the proposal is currently with the Provost).</p> <p>LA&PS response We are in support of this suggestion as well as the process outlined above.</p>	<p>GPD</p> <p>Continue out-reach efforts to bring supervisors and instructors into key roles in the program whose work represents key areas of EDI, in the underlined gaps of Black studies/critical race scholars and Indigenous methods scholars. Conduct informal evaluation of how representation of these key areas has evolved since PPR process 3 years on.</p>	<p>F2019: report on activities since PPR to ensure that program has added additional affiliated and active faculty that enhance EDI in the program, in particular in underlined areas of Indigenous methods and critical race/Black studies scholarship.</p>

Recommendation	Program and Institutional (YSGS and LAPS) Response	Lead and Proposed Action	Proposed Timeline
<p>Seminar on Grant Applications in Fall prior to deadlines.</p>	<p>ComCult response Agreed, existing programming can be better communicated.</p> <p>YSGS response YSGS supports the program-level response on improving communications. YSGS also notes that ComCult has been actively supporting students with grant applications.</p> <p>LA&PS response LA&PS supports this desire to improve communication on this issue. The active support of student grant applications is important.</p>	<p>GPD</p> <p>Continue to hold and clearly communicate this workshop. Update of website/social media assets will help.</p>	<p>Spring 2018- reflect on workshop process, plan F2018 workshops.</p>
<p>Better advising on MA options and distinctions among MRP and Thesis choices.</p>	<p>ComCult response Agreed, with policy changes, deadline adjustments, and practical changes underway.</p> <p>YSGS response YSGS supports the program-level response.</p> <p>LA&PS response We are in support of these changes.</p>	<p>GPD</p> <p>Revisit MA options as part of committee devoted to articulation of PhD research creation options.</p>	<p>S2018- Committee to be created.</p> <p>Fall 2018- Preliminary Report to ComCult Executive and discussion.</p> <p>W2019- Changes to be adopted by ComCult Executive.</p>

Recommendation	Program and Institutional (YSGS and LAPS) Response	Lead and Proposed Action	Proposed Timeline
<p>Library liaisons assigned to ComCult at both Ryerson and York should participate in a joint library orientation session.</p>	<p>ComCult response Agreed.</p> <p>YSGS response YSGS supports the program-level response.</p> <p>LA&PS response Agreed.</p>	<p>GPD</p> <p>Consider/plan joint library orientation session for F2018</p>	<p>F2018, plan/conduct session or else plan/conduct feasible substitute event if not logistically possible for library staff.</p>

Administrative and Financial Recommendations

Recommendation	Program and Institutional (YSGS and LAPS) Response	Lead and Proposed Action	Proposed Timeline
<p>Program Review Site Visits should provide adequate time to prepare and deliberate collectively, preceding and following consultations.</p>	<p>ComCult response Agreed, adding that advance consultation with the program may also be helpful.</p> <p>Further, the rarity of a joint, bi-campus visit led to inadequate timing because of unavoidably duplicated meetings at both campuses.</p> <p>YSGS response YSGS supports the program-level response.</p> <p>LA&PS response Agreed.</p>	<p>GPD and Associate Dean of YSGS</p> <p>Hold planning meeting with GPD and Dean's office to involve GPDs in planning for next PPR cycle, ensure schedule takes into account joint evaluation and lessons learned here.</p>	<p>1 year prior to internal planning for PPR cycle, hold meeting to make sure schedule /process is set up to allow for full evaluation of joint program.</p>

Recommendation	Program and Institutional (YSGS and LAPS) Response	Lead and Proposed Action	Proposed Timeline
<p>Decanal and Provostial strategy at Ryerson to ameliorate discrepancy in PhD financial support and GA opportunities.</p>	<p>ComCult response Agreed, existing ad hoc planning is insufficient. Systematic changes in practices are urgent.</p> <p>YSGS response YSGS supports the principle of increasing student funding levels. However, YSGS also notes that the levels of financial support for ComCult students are consistent with norms at Ryerson University.</p> <p>Funding provided to the program through Ryerson Graduate Fellowships (RGFs) is consistent with that provided to other interdisciplinary programs at Ryerson. YSGS notes that most GA positions are controlled by departments and other faculties at Ryerson. YSGS also notes that it does provide financial support for interdisciplinary GAs, including for ComCult. YSGS also encourages the program to explore increases to other sources of funding, including external scholarships and stipends from faculty supervisors.</p> <p>LA&PS response We are in general supportive of strong funding packages for graduate students but note that our financial support is largely determined by the CUPE 3903 collective agreement. There are other scholarships which are available to students on a competitive basis which may improve their funding.</p>	<p>GPD</p> <p>As above:</p> <p>Conduct targeted recruitment pilot project: GA/RA linked to specific faculty member to be advertised externally.</p> <p>Meet with faculty to discuss more targeted recruitment, work on setting up additional targeted recruitment programs next year and process going forward.</p> <p>In addition:</p> <p>Work with departments and schools to earmark GA/lectureship opportunities for ComCult students.</p>	<p>a. Targeted recruitment pilot project by Spring 2018.</p> <p>b. Meet with faculty to plan additional/future targeted recruitment by F2018.</p> <p>c. Find slates of earmarked GA positions by recruitment for F2020 class.</p>

Recommendation	Program and Institutional (YSGS and LAPS) Response	Lead and Proposed Action	Proposed Timeline
<p>Joint institutional strategy for cluster-hires in areas of communication and culture, dedicated service to ComCult.</p>	<p>ComCult response Agreed. We are willing and eager to coordinate with departments and faculties.</p> <p>YSGS response As noted above, the appointment of new faculty is outside of the purview of YSGS. YSGS also notes that, given the institutional differences in structures between York and Ryerson, it may not be practical to pursue a joint strategy on hiring. YSGS would be prepared to discuss these issues in a meeting between ComCult's GPDs and the responsible Associate Deans at both universities. YSGS will, however, coordinate the development of a proposal for increased cross-appointments in Ryerson's interdisciplinary programs, including ComCult. This proposal will be presented to the Provost during the 2017-2018 academic year (Note: the proposal is currently with the Provost).</p> <p>LA&PS response The issue of joint hires is outside of the purview of the Dean's Office however we would argue that the program could try to work creatively in terms of strategically planning hires at each institution to address the perceived needs of each institution as well as the graduate program</p>	<p>GPD</p> <p>Follow up with YSGS on progress of this initiative.</p>	<p>Meeting to be held in F2018 on progress of this initiative and its implications for the faculty hiring going forward.</p>

Recommendation	Program and Institutional (YSGS and LAPS) Response	Lead and Proposed Action	Proposed Timeline
<p>Maintain staffing levels, with additional support at peak times.</p>	<p>ComCult response Agreed.</p> <p>YSGS response YSGS notes that ComCult has a full-time Graduate Program Administrator. Staffing levels are consistent with the norms at Ryerson University. YSGS will continue to monitor whether staffing levels are appropriate and will consider well-substantiated proposals from the program for any adjustments.</p> <p>LA&PS response The staffing for the program is in accordance with faculty wide practices. Should a situation arise where more staffing is required a request can be made to LA&PS's Executive Officer to address the issue.</p>	<p>GPD</p> <p>Hold meeting with YSGS to discuss monitoring of ComCult staffing levels.</p>	<p>Spring 2019- hold meeting to discuss ComCult staffing levels.</p>

Recommendation	Program and Institutional (YSGS and LAPS) Response	Lead and Proposed Action	Proposed Timeline
<p>Ryerson Provost should renovate 111 Gerrard as a dedicated Program space at Ryerson.</p>	<p>ComCult response Agreed, or a similar initiative. This is an urgent concern, and an embarrassment for doctoral recruitment, a detriment to retention.</p> <p>YSGS response YSGS notes that 111 Gerrard was recently renovated. ComCult students do currently have access to the facility, including a large open area, 4 offices (each with 2 desks) assigned to ComCult PhD students, and a kitchen. The space at 111 Gerrard is also available to the students of other interdisciplinary programs. YSGS notes that ComCult students also have access to study space in the Student Learning Centre (SLC).</p>	<p>GPD-YSGS</p> <p>Continue working to find additional dedicated space for ComCult, understanding that: a) Lack of space undermines our recruitment pitches; b) Since the PPR the ComCult lounge on the 3rd floor of the RCC was repurposed as RTA offices, meaning there is less workspace now than when the review underlined a lack of space at Ryerson as a major issue; c) The future of 111 Gerrard is, at present, unclear.</p> <p>Hold meeting to confirm the future of the 111 Gerrard building and space and its implications on ComCult student work space.</p>	<p>F2018. Hold meeting to discuss ComCult space, including 111 Gerrard Street, Toronto.</p>



A report on the progress of these initiatives will be provided in the Follow-up Report as indicated in the Outcome section of this document.

Alice J. Pitt
Vice-Provost Academic, York University

Marcia Moshé, PhD
Interim Vice-Provost, Academic, Ryerson University



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

Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan

Periodic Program Review (PPR)

Film + Photography Preservation and Collections Management (F+PPCM) (MA)

Last Updated: May 14, 2018