FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

PERIODIC PROGRAM REVIEW
GRAPHIC COMMUNICATIONS MANAGEMENT
Faculty of Communication & Design

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
The School of Graphic Communications Management (GCM) was one of the original programs offered at Ryerson. The School encountered unprecedented growth between 2005 and 2013. The number of students enrolled in the program grew from approximately 400 in 2005 to over 525 in 2013. Growth has continued with 575 enrolled students in 2015, and a significant additional number of students from other programs enrolled in courses offered.

Growth has brought change, and some challenges for the program. The planned capacity of the newly constructed Heidelberg Centre School of Graphic Communications Management that opened in 2002 was planned to satisfy a "steady state" enrollment of 120 first year students, and 400 students in total. This target was promptly achieved, and surpassed shortly thereafter.

Highlights
GCM is "home" to an engaged and thriving student cohort. Surveys conducted for the Periodic Program Review of current students, graduates and industry are very positive about the GCM program and about Ryerson University. Students are supported in their educational studies by a diverse and dedicated faculty and staff complement. Student applications remain stable or increasing, at about 900 applicants per year for approximately 180 first year spots. There was an 8% year-over-year increase in student applications for Fall 2015.

The increase in the number of enrolled students provided the School with resources to hire additional RFA and CUPE1 faculty members. Hiring has been focused on building diversity, depth and breadth to the School – each faculty member brings specific experience, skills, education and research interests.

Increasing the faculty complement has led to improved Scholarly, Research and Creative (SRC) Activity outputs, and more team-based SRC with partners internally and externally. GCM faculty members are sought-after collaborators on research projects. SRC outputs have increased in the number of peer reviewed papers and conference presentations, industry journals, white papers and technical papers and magazine articles. There has been significant student involvement in SRC, such as third year research projects, RyeTAGA's student research journal and student presentations at the biannual Printing Future Days conference. Some faculty members have received NSERC (unusual in FCAD), SSHRC and Mitacs grants.

The Print Media Research Centre (PMRC) was launched in 2013. The PMRC has the potential to encourage, strengthen, and promote faculty SRC output and increased student SRC activities.

The School of Graphic Communications Management was asked to host the 2013 Conference of the International Circle of Educational Institutes for Graphic Arts Technology and Management (IC) Conference, the first conference hosted by GCM. The School welcomed over 100 delegates from 23 countries. Subsequent to the IC conference, GCM has discovered that the School has become a favoured venue for similar events. GCM will host the 2016 IARIGAI (International Association of Research Organizations for the Information, Media and Graphic Arts Industries) Conference, and has been approached to host the GCEA (Graphic Communications Educators' Association) Conference in a future year. Each of those would bring approximately 100 delegates to Ryerson.

International opportunities significantly increased during the period under review. Exchange agreements with three European universities were confirmed. At the beginning of the program review period GCM did not have any exchange agreements. Now, outbound exchange students have the opportunity to live and learn at three European universities in different countries. The student exchange program is very popular, and GCM is delighted to welcome inbound students from partner schools. Formal faculty exchange mechanisms are also in place, but are as yet unused. One faculty member, however, did spend several months of sabbatical leave teaching at a partner university.

Extra-curricular opportunities are numerous in GCM, with student associations related to many industry groups focused on specific areas of the industry including research, packaging, transactional documents, flexographic printing, digital printing, letterpress printing, and signage. In many cases, student groups travel to annual conferences with support from industry, P-FACS, RCDS, FCAD and GCM. There are many activities offered at the University, and GCM students are active in intramural sports, working on the production teams for student newspapers, serving in the Tri-Mentoring office and serving in student government. Due to their production, design and management skills, GCM students employed by many other departments at the University as part-time employees.

Post-graduation opportunities remain very strong, as they have throughout the entire history of the program. Even during periods of economic downturn, graduates of the GCM program are able to launch their careers soon after graduation. Internships following the third year of study often lead to offers of employment from internship employers. Many students return for their fourth year of education with the knowledge that an entry-level career position awaits them upon graduation. Employment remains strong – and employment opportunities are expanding beyond traditional industries and employers.

The number GCM graduates who are pursuing post-graduate degrees is increasing (mostly at the Master's level). In the last decade graduates have pursued MBA designations and Masters degrees in Professional Communication at Ryerson University. More recently graduates have enrolled in the Masters of Digital Media and the Masters in Media Management, also at Ryerson University. Other GCM graduates have pursued studies in print-related fields at Clemson University and the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT).

Industry support for the Graphic Communications Management program is nothing short of amazing, especially in the form of gifts-in-kind (equipment, materials and software) and scholarships, but also in terms in invitations for students to participate in conferences and meetings of professional associations. Support in terms of information exchange about current industry practices and technology is highly valued and assists the School in decision-making about the trends to follow and incorporate in teaching and research.

The Canadian Printing Industries Scholarship Trust Fund (CPISTF) was funded in maintains a $1M endowment which funds 25-30 annual renewable scholarships of $1500 for GCM students.

Efforts of all stakeholders have promoted reputations of both Ryerson University and the School of Graphic Communications Management on a worldwide basis. The School communicates to a broader audience through thriving social media outlets including the School's website, Twitter, Facebook and other media.

In 2015, the School introduced a new curriculum that is flexible and offers student more options in determining their educational paths. This satisfied student questions, comments and demand since the previous program review. Many GCM courses, from both the old and new curricula, have been added to the Open Elective table and PR Tables of many programs both within and outside of the Faculty of Communication & Design. This encourages multidisciplinary approaches in classes and facilitates student

interactions across programs. GCM also participates in the Creative Industries program with a popular module in Printing and Publishing.

Challenges
Growth has brought many positive effects, but it has also led to challenges. Some of these are significant. Some can be addressed, and others must be addressed in the future.

The increased number of students is straining the physical plant. The Heidelberg Centre was built for a specific number of students, which has now been exceeded. Lab facilities, while updated in terms of technology, are utilized to their maximum and space challenges limit the ability to add new and emerging technologies. Print and Prepress lab staff are often finished their workday when evening labs are taught. Some instructors do not have the technical expertise to conduct detailed troubleshooting on some pieces of laboratory equipment (such as printing presses, or equipment in the server room), and if problems cannot be rectified as they occur in the evening, there is a spillover effect on the next day's labs.

Technical and front office staff members require additional support and assistance, especially at peak activity times during each term.

The PPR student and graduate surveys suggested improvement; this was often centred on student choice and elective options. These suggestions were addressed in the new GCM curriculum, launched in Fall 2015. The offering of new courses brought a new (and welcome) cohort of students to the School, from schools/departments/Faculties as diverse as TRSM, Sport Media, English, Creative Industries, and Professional Communication. The School expects the number of students enrolling from other programs at the university to increase in the near future.

The school would like to attract students with higher entering averages. Several steps have been taken in this regard, but ongoing efforts are required to promote the program and boost the number of applications.

The number of scholarships and awards is healthy; however, increased enrollment means more scholarships are needed, and in higher amounts. This is especially needed in response to increasing costs for education.

The faculty complement is lean, with 11 RFA faculty for nearly 600 students. As class sizes increase, lead instructors face additional work supervising the work of additional lab instructors for the course, teaching assistants and others.

The School is subject to the negative perception of the printing industry in the popular press, and seeks ideas about how to counteract this. In the past decade the printing and allied industries have assumed a leadership role in reducing waste, tackling emissions from manufacturing. In the packaging field, the industry has become a leader in promoting sustainability, food safety and addressing concerns about packaging waste. There is more work to be done regarding promoting the value of the industry. In Canada, the printing and allied industries are a significant employer, with employees earning higher-than-average wages.

The Periodic Program Review process confirmed the School's strengths, it recognized a limited number of weaknesses, and it has identified opportunities for the School to pursue in the future. The School of Graphic Communications Management seeks support in terms of two main areas, space and personnel, in order to address areas of weakness and to continue to provide a quality education to Ryerson University students, while remaining focused on future opportunities.

FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT (FAR)

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 program delivered by the School of Graphic Communications Management. This 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 report includes an Implementation Plan that identifies the recommendations; 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 those recommendations.

A) SUMMARY OF THE PERIODIC PROGRAM REVIEW OF THE GRAPHIC COMMUNICATIONS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

The School of Graphic Communications Management submitted a self study report to the Vice Provost Academic on September 29, 2015. The self study presented the program descriptions and learning outcomes, an analytical assessment of the program, and program data including the data collected from a student survey 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 each full-time faculty member in the School.

Two arm's-length external reviewers (Dr. Nona L. Woolbright, Associate Professor, Graduate Coordinator Clemson University, Clemson, South Carolina; and Tommie Nyström, Lecturer in Graphic Communication, Vice Chair of the Study Board for Computer Science & Media Technology, Chair, Operational board for the study programme Graphic Design & Communication, Linköping University Sweden) were appointed by the Dean of the Faculty of Communication & Design from a set of proposed reviewers. They reviewed the self study documentation and then conducted a site visit to Ryerson University on October 5 – 6, 2015.

The visit included meetings with the Provost & Vice-President Academic; the Dean of the Faculty of Communications & Design; the Vice Provost Academic; the Associate Dean of Faculty & Student Affairs; the Chair of GCM; the subject Librarian; a panel of current undergraduate students and a panel of recent graduates of the program; and a large number of full-time faculty and support staff. The Peer Review Team (PRT) had an opportunity to tour the Heidelberg Centre School of Graphic Communications Management, the Ryerson Student Learning Centre, the Ryerson University Library & Archives, and to have a general campus tour.

In their report (November 9, 2015), the Peer Review Team (PRT) provides feedback that describes how the Graphic Communications Management program meets the IQAP evaluation criteria and is consistent with the University's mission and academic priorities. The PRT found very few issues with the Ryerson University GCM program in total. The faculty and staff were found to have many fine attributes and to compare well with their peer universities on all academic levels. Overall, students were found to have quality equipment, up-to-date pre-press, and generally very good facilities at their disposal.

The main areas of strength identified by the PRT include: student engagement; hands-on environment; faculty involvement and commitment; the GCM Job Fair; students' feelings of connection to faculty and staff; and the presence of a dedicated academic advisor. GCM has worked diligently to develop these strengths, and plans to continue support for these areas identified as strengths.

The PRT also identified areas for improvement:
a) Physical space: GCM's building was designed to house 400 students, but now is being utilized by 600.
b) Internship placement: Discussion with current students as well as alumni revealed difficulty in finding placements for the required internship.
c) Technical Support: Support is needed for students during after-hours and an increase is needed in the number of technical support staff.

The Director of the School of Graphic Communications Management submitted a response to the Peer Review Report in March, 2016. The response to both the PRT Report and the Program's Response was submitted by the Dean of the Faculty of Communication & Design on April 19, 2016.

B) SUMMARY OF THE PRT's RECOMMENDATIONS WITH THE PROGRAM'S AND DEAN'S RESPONSES

Recommendations
1. Curriculum: Since the overall evaluation process of this peer review is centered on the old curriculum, many of the questions raised have already been remedied within the new curriculum. The reviewers questioned the number of projects that will be in the new program and if the additions will add an even greater burden to already stressed lab space.

Program's Response: Based on the analysis done as part of the new curriculum proposal, GCM does not believe that the new curriculum will increase lab resource requirements. The School actually found the new curriculum evens out the lab requirements better across semesters; however, increased enrolment in GCM courses, especially the lab courses open to other programs, may add to stress already experienced with the labs. The School is partially addressing this concern by moving some courses to non-GCM labs, particularly shared FCAD labs and general-purpose computer labs starting in Fall 2016.

Dean's Response: The School has indicated that based on a careful analysis conducted as part of their new curriculum proposal that the School found the new curriculum evens out the lab requirements better across semesters. Cognizant nonetheless of increased enrollment, GCM is moving some of its courses to non-GCM labs starting in Fall 2016. As with all new curriculum rollouts in FCAD, I will continue to liaise closely with School Chairs and provide support as necessary to ensure a student experience that meets and even exceeds quality assurance standards.

2. Faculty & Staff: There appears to be a need for additional technicians, to avoid understaffed labs. There is no contingency for when a technician is away from work, and there is no support for either students or faculty after 4 pm.

Program's Response: GCM has taken steps to improve technical support for students. Since 2009, the School has employed CUPE 3 TA / Lab Monitors approximately 700 hours per academic year. The Lab Monitors assist with some basic lab maintenance to alleviate technical staff workload, and they are able to open labs in the evenings for open hours, and provide a basic level of support to students. While this step has been very beneficial at relatively modest cost, the School is in agreement with the recommendation of the PRT.

The School was worked with the Dean of FCAD to post a position for an additional full-time OPSEU Client

Support Technician. The hire was completed in early 2016 with a start date on February 1st. This position, now in place, covers a later shift during the academic terms to provide support in GCM labs from mid-day until 8:30 p.m. or later on weekdays. At the same time, the existing two technical staff will be better able to focus on tasks that require their levels of expertise and experience. While this new position is a term position for 17 months, it is hoped that the position will be made permanent in the future if it is shown to be of benefit to the School and if resources permit.

Dean's Response: The Dean is am in agreement with the PRT and the School that additional technical support is needed to ensure adequate support in GCM labs. A position for an additional full- time OPSEU 17-month term position for a Client Support Technician has been in place since February 1, 2016 with the intention of making the position permanent if it proves beneficial to the School, resources permitting, and additional lab monitors have also been hired to assist technical staff. With regards to the School's desire to secure additional faculty and staff support, the Dean will consider ways to have additional resources allocated to the School within the constraints of budget and growth plans.

3. Students: (a) An issue of concern is the space limitations caused by the growth of the enrollment exceeding space, and, with the new curricula, the space issue will become more apparent, as the labs will be booked by classes from early morning to late in the day.

Program's Response: The School agrees that this remains a major area for improvement. The current Dean of FCAD recognizes the space issues in GCM, and the School is aware that he is working hard to help GCM find a solution. The Dean has created an FCAD Space Task Force that has worked to identify how FCAD Schools can optimize and share spaces. While the ultimate solution for GCM is additional space on campus, already the Dean has assisted with some steps that provide a measure of relief. The School remains committed to continuing to seek additional space on campus for the needs identified in the Self-Study and PRT Reports. Ultimately, the resources required for additional space will depend on support from the University Administration.

Dean's Response: The Dean will continue to work closely with the School and the University to find more long-term solutions for GCM's space challenges.

(b) Another concern is the program's end of semester course examination process, and the reviewers recommend that the faculty consider an alternative final exam practice that allows for retesting without completely requiring retaking the course if students fail the final exam.

School's Response: The School is in agreement with reviewing the exam rule and considering alternatives. This will require additional study and consultation with stakeholders, including faculty and students. The substance of the School's discussion will include issues including:
- *An overview of all courses to be taught in the new curriculum*
- *Team-taught courses*
- *Courses without examinations*
- *The current exam policy and how it affects non-GCM students taking GCM courses*
- *Policies of other departments that also teach GCM students (eg. Accounting, Marketing)*
- *Exams worth a only small portion of a course's overall grade*
- *Rewrites*

The Learning and Teaching Office and a Ryerson Curriculum Development Consultant will be consulted to identify alternative assessment approaches coincident with the implementation of the new curriculum.

Dean's Response: The Dean is pleased that as University policy evolves and as GCM moves forward with its new curriculum, the School is "in agreement with reviewing the exam rule and considering alternatives."

The Dean will continue to liaise with the School to ensure that best pedagogical practices promote an exceptional student experience.

(c) Another concern is the difficulty in finding placements for the required internship.

School's Response: *GCM is committed to ongoing improvements in the internship program and, in particular, the number and quality of internships for students. Steps taken in recent years include:*
hiring of a part-time internship coordinator; expanding outreach to companies ahead of the Job Fair; development of an internship manual, mandating since 2014 that internships, with rare exceptions, must be paid at or above minimum wage to improve the experience for students and employers; and accepting third year international exchange as an alternate experiential learning experience, equivalent to internship.

Dean's Response: *The School has continued to improve its internship program. Given the increased demand for internships in FCAD programs and the growing legal complexities of student placement, an FCAD internship task force has been created that is working to develop Faculty-wide support mechanisms to ensure students are facilitated with the most positive and productive internship experience possible.*

4. Facilities and Equipment: A recommendation is to require the use of personal computers in labs rather than providing laboratory computers onsite. By providing cloud access to available software (i.e. Adobe Creative Cloud) some of the laboratory space issues might be reduced. Also, by replacing current litho press with a smaller one, a newer flexo press could be placed in the production printing lab.

Program's Response: *This topic is raised almost every year during faculty planning meetings. Laptops are not a required tool for the program at present. The School reviews this policy every year, and has always come to the same decision based on such factors as:*
•   The School offers more sophisticated output options for printing of proofs and final projects, which often require specific drivers and other device-dependent software
•   The School operates professional-grade workflow systems (which in general, are too complex, and too expensive) to be installed, operated and maintained by student users on laptops
•   Maintaining lab computers is less expensive (particularly based on time) than providing assistance to 600 students with personal computers
•   Lab computers are always up to date, ready to operate at the beginning of lab sessions and students and faculty can be assured that everyone is using the same versions of software and operating systems

With regards to the use of personal computers in the labs:
•   Software programs in senior years are sophisticated and prohibitively expensive for students
•   Hardware and software maintenance is controlled at the school level and all students should be able to work from the same platform
•   Students are permitted to bring personal computers to the labs.
This situation will be reviewed.

Having only recently (2009) installed a small flexo press in the print lab in the HEI building, this recommendation was a surprise for the program. The current press suits the School's needs, is an excellent teaching tool for GCM students, and students have won numerous international competitions by submitting works they have printed on this press. Nonetheless, the School will investigate options for the funding of a more sophisticated press.

Dean's Response: *The Dean agrees with the School that, at present, the compatibility and affordability issues inherent in the sophisticated hardware/software required for the program prohibits a laptop-only option. With regards to the PRT's recommendation to consider replacing the School's flexo press, the Dean agrees with the School that this does not seem to be a priority given that the current press was installed in*

2009 and continues to suit the School's needs quite adequately. Nonetheless, the School has assured the Dean that the suitability of this and other equipment will continue to be evaluated on a regular basis.

C) ADDITIONAL PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE SELF STUDY

Alumni Organization: The School intends to revitalize and develop the alumni organization. It has not historically been active, and the School has developed in many ways, but there is potential for the alumni association to develop and play a role in the future of the School, especially around relationships with industry, community and graduates, reputation enhancement, and advancement. Other priorities, such as new curriculum implementation, program review, student recruitment, lab updates and space, have been higher than the alumni initiative. However, this remains an important initiative to address.

GCM Website: The School, with assistance from FCAD Technical Staff, plans to update and consolidate its two websites, www.ryerson.ca/gcm and www.ryersongcm.ca and migrate to the University's new Adobe content management system.

D) IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Recommendation #1: Curriculum: Identify the number of projects that will be in the new program and if the additions will add an even greater burden to already stressed lab space.	
Objective: Move some courses to non-GCM labs, particularly shared FCAD labs and general-purpose computer labs.	
Timeline: Ongoing	
Responsibility for leading initiative: Chair of GCM	
Responsibly for approving recommendation, providing any resources made necessary by the recommendation, and overall monitoring of the implementation of the recommendation: Faculty Dean	

Recommendation #2: Faculty & Staff: Review the need for additional technicians, to avoid understaffed labs.	
Objective: Take steps to improve technical support for students. Continue to work with the Dean will consider ways to have additional resources allocated to the School within the constraints of budget and growth plans.	
Timeline: Ongoing	
Responsibility for leading initiative: Chair of GCM	
Responsibly for approving recommendation, providing any resources made necessary by the recommendation, and overall monitoring of the implementation of the recommendation: Faculty Dean	

Recommendation #3: Students: Consider (a) the lab space limitations caused by the growth of the enrollment exceeding space and the new curricula; (b) an alternative final exam practice; and (c) the difficulty in finding placements for the required internship.	
Objective: (a) Continue to seek additional space on campus; (b) review the exam rule and consider alternatives; consult with the Learning and Teaching Office and a Ryerson Curriculum Development Consultant; and (c) continue to implement ongoing improvements in the internship program and, in particular, the number and quality of internships for students.	
Timeline: Ongoing	
Responsibility for leading initiative: Chair of GCM	
Responsibly for approving recommendation, providing any resources made necessary by the recommendation, and overall monitoring of the implementation of the recommendation: Faculty Dean	

Recommendation #4: Facilities and Equipment: (a) Require the use of personal computers in labs rather than providing laboratory computers onsite. (b) Replace current litho press with a newer flexo press.	
Objective: (a) Continue to review the feasibility of personal computers; and (b) investigate options for the funding of a more sophisticated press.	

Timeline: Ongoing	
Responsibility for leading initiative: Chair of GCM	
Responsibly for approving recommendation, providing any resources made necessary by the recommendation, and overall monitoring of the implementation of the recommendation: Faculty Dean	

Additional Program Recommendation #5: Revitalize and develop the alumni organization	
Objective: Explore and act upon the potential for the alumni association to develop and play a role in the future of the School, especially around relationships with industry, community and graduates, reputation enhancement, and advancement.	
Timeline: 2019-2020	
Responsibility for leading initiative: Chair of GCM	
Responsibly for approving recommendation, providing any resources made necessary by the recommendation, and overall monitoring of the implementation of the recommendation: Faculty Dean	

Additional Program Recommendation #6: Update the GCM website	
Objective: Update and consolidate the current two websites, www.ryerson.ca/gcm and www.ryersongcm.ca, and migrate to the University's new Adobe content management system.	
Timeline: 2018	
Responsibility for leading initiative: Chair of GCM	
Responsibly for approving recommendation, providing any resources made necessary by the recommendation, and overall monitoring of the implementation of the recommendation: Faculty Dean	

Date of next Periodic Program Review
2025 - 2026