

FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

PERIODIC PROGRAM REVIEW JOURNALISM

Faculty of Communication & Design

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ryerson's Bachelor of Journalism (BJourn) program has a storied past and hard-earned reputation. It continues to lead through its innovative curriculum and steadily growing focus on students learning journalism by doing journalism for real audiences. Recent years have seen important changes in technology and the approach to teaching journalism, including three major movements that have challenged the field: a search for new business models, the social media revolution and the adoption of mobile, wireless technology as a platform not only for the dissemination of news, but also for its production. Our response has included a continuing focus on substantial curricular innovation, with major revisions to program framework introduced first in the "media-agnostic" reform of 2007 and now in the dramatic alterations to foundational sequencing and final-year options introduced in February 2015.

This rapid and continuous change in the world of journalism has required the School to be focused on its goals and objectives, with academic objectives for students in the BJourn program now expressed as follows:

- Understand the significance and role of media in society
- Possess current professional skills, including demonstrable and relevant technical ability and legal knowledge, acquired through experiential learning
- Be capable of conducting and synthesizing high-level professional and scholarly research
- Anticipate, identify and influence challenges and opportunities for journalism
- Think critically and analytically
- Engage the world as a global citizen, recognizing one's place and interaction in the widest of spheres
- Appreciate core journalistic values and practice according to professional ethics
- Integrate creativity, curiosity and passion into journalistic practice
- Be capable of working autonomously and collaboratively, including occupying positions of leadership
- Appreciate the challenges and opportunities of doing journalism in an environment of diverse perspectives, cultures, and interests
- Demonstrate a spirit of entrepreneurship and the ability to adapt and problem-solve in changing circumstances

The School's current academic plan lays down three priority areas: dynamic curriculum (including innovation in instructional modes and continuing growth of the News Studies Minor), ambition in faculty members' scholarship and creative activity and transformative leadership in the world of journalism. While working toward these goals, the School benefits greatly from its experienced faculty, gifted students and robust, multi-skilled administrative staff. It also benefits from the Ryerson Journalism Research Centre (RJRC), which fosters research and mobilizes knowledge, and the housing of *J-Source* at Ryerson that offers students creative work opportunities, which should dovetail with the editorial mandate of the *Ryerson Review of Journalism*. Most students – especially final-year students – participate in *The Ryersonian*'s digital-first multiplatform news operation and benefit from outside internships. And finally, there is an increasing focus on collaborations with news organizations in Toronto wherein our students produce works of journalism of various types of media.

The number of applications for the BJourn program has declined in recent years, leading to a preventive reduction in 2015 intake to the more demographically appropriate level (127 students per year) that predated Ontario's "double cohort" surge. Demand for the BJourn program remains strong, however, as is

the quality of students entering the program reflected in high school graduation averages. Although final data is unavailable at the time of writing, there was no significant change in the number of applications for the entering class of Fall 2016—the first time in recent years that applications have held steady.

Once here, students enjoy balanced prospects of both academic achievement and excellence in the practice of journalism. They learn to use the most current production tools on every platform and are immersed in the realities of reporting in a diverse city and the challenge and importance of inclusion. Understanding Aboriginal issues and other aspects of social responsibility are increasingly crucial points of instruction, along with attention to multimedia tools in creating and disseminating journalistic work and to the entrepreneurial basis of professional success in today's information marketplace. This studio-based, hands-on instruction is complemented by larger classes and alternative modalities such as asynchronous online modules. And, along with professional skills, students' elective opportunities allow them to gain advanced knowledge in the humanities and social sciences, especially as they are encouraged to pursue minors chosen from Ryerson's wide array of disciplines.

Current students, graduates and employers continue to express overall satisfaction with the program, through a perceived gap in preparedness after second year was one of several driving forces framing the latest curriculum reform and the program now being phased in. The physical plant is in good shape, with recent major renovations on the ground floor fostering collaborations and a mobile-computing environment. Our financial stability is as shaky as is the financial stability for most post-secondary educational institutions in Canada, raising concerns for future elective offerings as well as for the adequacy of essential student services. We are currently seeking funding for renovations on the second floor to retain our currency and foster interdisciplinary collaboration; attention is also needed – now more than ever – to our resources for academic advising.

Regular surveying of students and a continued commitment to innovation in curriculum will underpin our progress in coming years. This includes developing sustainable plans for high-quality journalism, packaged and delivered innovatively, in all the School's publications. We also need to articulate an enhanced "value proposition" of the BJourn degree that expresses the broad benefits of training in research on current events, critical thinking and clarity of communication using multiple platforms. But overall, the BJourn program is strongly positioned for continuing progress and there is good reason for confidence in our students' potential to lead and shape the evolving world of journalism.

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 Journalism. 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 JOURNALISM PROGRAM

The School of Journalism submitted a self study report to the Vice Provost Academic on April 16, 2016. 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 external arm's-length external reviewers (Prof. Kelly Toughill, Associate Professor, School of Journalism, University of King's College, Halifax, NS.; and Dr. Brian Gabriel, Associate Professor, Department of Journalism, Concordia University, Montreal, QC) and one internal reviewer (Dr. Art Blake, Associate Professor, Department of History, Ryerson University, Toronto, ON) 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 January 30 – January 31, 2017.

The visit included meetings with the Interim Provost and Vice-President Academic; Interim Vice Provost Academic; Dean, Faculty of Communication Art and Design (FCAD); Associate Dean, Graduate Education, FCAD; Dean and Vice-Provost, Yeates School of Graduate Studies; Associate Dean, Yeates School of Graduate Studies; Chair, Journalism; Graduate Program Director; Associate Chair; and the Undergraduate Program Director. The PRT also met with ten (10) Journalism faculty members; nine (9) School of Journalism staff members; the subject Librarian; three (3) alumni; and three (3) students. The reviewers toured classrooms, studios and meeting spaces used by the School of Journalism, including the recently refurbished television studio, the radio studio, the Venn, the Ryersonian newsroom, the Library and the new Student Learning Centre (SLC).

In their report (February 27, 2017), the Peer Review Team (PRT) provided feedback that describes how the Journalism program meets the IQAP evaluation criteria and is consistent with the University's mission and academic priorities. The learning outcomes are appropriate for contemporary journalism education. The peer review committee indicated that Journalism naturally lends itself to hands-on, real-world experience that necessarily goes beyond the classroom, and, at all program levels, the School's curricula demand active engagement through journalistic production and a required professional internship before graduation. The PRT agrees that Ryerson journalism students are well equipped to enter the workforce as trained professionals.

The main areas of strength identified by the PRT includes the up-to-date undergraduate curriculum that reflects best practices in the profession of journalism and in journalism education. The television and radio studios are state of the art. The journalism work created in the studio is shown within the building and incorporated into the work of the online production classes. Faculty members have extensive professional records and are engaged scholars in areas such as journalism education, journalism history, and literary journalism. The review team was impressed with the quality and amount of advising available to undergraduate students.

The PRT also identified areas for improvement. The most significant recommendation for the undergraduate program is an increase in faculty hires. The PRT also noted that the current eight-month contracts of the technical staff could be extended along with opportunities for their professional development.

The Director of the School of Journalism submitted a response to the PRT Report on March 28, 2017. The response to both the PRT Report and the Program's Response was submitted by the Dean of the Faculty of Communication & Design on June 5, 2017.

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

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1. Hire at least two new tenure-track faculty members.

School's Response: *The School has fewer tenure-track faculty than in the past. The School has a number of concerns about how the responsibilities of tenure-stream colleagues for research and creative contributions, graduate supervisions and departmental service can be met with a reduced complement. The School agrees with the PRT that hiring new tenure-stream faculty who are focused on knowledge and experience in media transformation and its implications for innovative curriculum is strategically vital for the School.*

Dean's Response: *The Dean's Office will continue to push for more tenure-stream hires in the school. In order to meet the immediate demands of the school, the Dean has secured the approval to hire two Limited Term Faculty positions: a single-term appointment and a two-year appointment.*

RECOMMENDATION 2. Extend the current eight-month contracts of the technical staff and seek ways to bolster their professional development opportunities.

School's Response: *The School agrees the technical staff play a crucial role in delivering the curriculum and supporting faculty. We will address this recommendation by examining a) extending the contracts and, b) bolstering professional development opportunities.*

Dean's Response: *The FCAD Operations Manager will assess staff levels across the Faculty in an effort to optimize the technical needs of our nine schools. Regarding the PRT recommendation to provide technical staff with professional development opportunities to keep current with the latest technologies the program manager was advised to allot some money to staff development in the school's budgets.*

RECOMMENDATION 3. Continue important collaborative work with ThriveRU, a program dedicated to ensuring the mental health of students.

School's Response: *The School is proud of its commitment to address student wellbeing and appreciates the PRT enthusiasm for our innovative initiatives. However, it should be clarified that Thrive RU is only one facet, and a recent one, of our commitment to the whole student. Staff members have been encouraged to acquire new skills and are among those enrolled in an upcoming personal development session on stress management. The University's Learning and Teaching Office (LTO) awarded a grant to two RFA journalism professors who will be testing techniques to address student anxiety about interviewing. At least four full-time and several part-time faculty members have shown longstanding interest in mental health issues by revamping student advising, doing scholarship on media coverage, continuing classroom innovations and hosting special events, to name a few examples.*

RECOMMENDATION 4. Review equipment check out policies to make sure they are adequately meeting the needs of the students.

School's Response: *The School agrees that this is critical—students cannot participate in courses and complete assignments without access to the appropriate equipment. To improve efficiency, the School entered into an equipment-sharing arrangement with the RTA School of Media a few years ago, and the School's technical and administrative staff is examining the policies and practices to ensure there is fair and equitable sharing between students in both schools.*

Dean's Response: *The Dean's Office will make sure to clarify student access to technical equipment by listing policy and procedures on the FCAD website as well as on the departmental website.*

RECOMMENDATION 5. Consider giving students greater access to Mac labs and the TV and radio studios.

School's Response: The School recognizes that it needs to better communicate to students that they have access to many of the radio suites located in the Rogers Communications Centre and they need only to request card/key access.

RECOMMENDATION 6. Consider more creative scheduling options where courses may meet more than once a week.

School's Response: Providing as much flexibility to students who are juggling many demands (work, family, commuting) in addition to full-time studies has been a priority. The School has developed e-learning to give students the opportunity to learn in their own environment on their own schedules, such as our in-house video tutorials to teach technology and some journalism skills to supplement classroom lectures and workshops, and, on-line courses (the first, an elective, was offered Winter 2017, and the second, a mandatory course, will be offered Fall 2017).

C) ADDITIONAL PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS IN SELF STUDY

1. Continue to develop curriculum that serves diverse student aspirations and makes the learning experience of marginalized groups, including Aboriginal students, as inclusive as possible. This will begin with implementation of the plan for raising understanding of Aboriginal people's issues and the challenges and opportunities for reporting their stories in a proper context, including implementation of the plan for 2016-17.
2. Make "learning journalism by doing innovative journalism for real audiences" more central to the second halves of the BJourn curricula. This includes developing sustainable plans for high-quality journalism, packaged and delivered innovatively, in all School publications.
3. Articulate an enhanced "value proposition" of the BJourn degree that expresses the many benefits of training research on current events, critical thinking through verification and clarity of communication using multiple platforms. Work more consistently with other journalism schools and organizations to foster public awareness of what journalism is and its social importance as an impartial source of information for the public.
4. Continue to grow News Studies enrolment, aided by a more robust "marketing" of these courses, through the new FCAD-wide focus on interdisciplinary learning and teaching, and by the already-apparent strong uptake of the Public Relations Minor by Professional Communication students.
5. Work with the Dean of, and colleagues in, FCAD to find more effective means of:
 - a. responding to students' increasingly challenging mental-health and academic-accommodations needs,
 - b. providing a consistently high quality of academic advising,
 - c. advocating for the university to allocate more financial resources for essential student services, and
 - d. designing a system that allows predictability and availability of elective course offerings.
6. Update our School's SRC policy to allow for the determination of priority areas for study and leverage funding opportunities to foster research in these areas.
7. Continue planning and implement of partnerships with Journalists for Human Rights and Witwatersrand University to share values and techniques for journalism in Canada and sub-Saharan Africa, with a particular focus on entrepreneurial media ventures.

D) IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

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| Recommendation #1: Hire at least two new tenure-track faculty members. | |
| Objective: To hire new tenure-stream faculty who are focused on knowledge and experience in media transformation and its implications for innovative curriculum. The School's requests in 2016 and 2017 for permission to hire tenure-track professors were not successful. It is hoped that this recommendation by the PRT will assist the Dean of FCAD, the Provost and the University administration to realize this recommendation. | |
| Timeline: Immediate | |
| Responsibility for leading initiative: Chair of Journalism | |
| Responsibly for approving recommendation, providing any resources made necessary by the recommendation, and overall monitoring of the implementation of the recommendation: Faculty Dean | |

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| Recommendation #2: Extend the current eight-month contracts of the technical staff and seek ways to bolster their professional development opportunities. | |
| Objective: Examine a) extending the contracts, and b) bolstering professional development opportunities for technical staff. | |
| Timeline: Immediate | |
| Responsibility for leading initiative: Chair of Journalism | |
| Responsibly for approving recommendation, providing any resources made necessary by the recommendation, and overall monitoring of the implementation of the recommendation: Faculty Dean | |

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| Recommendation #3: Continue important collaborative work with ThriveRU, a program dedicated to ensuring the mental health of students. | |
| Objective: Continue commitment to the whole student through various initiatives. | |
| Timeline: Ongoing | |
| Responsibility for leading initiative: Chair of Journalism | |
| Responsibly for approving recommendation, providing any resources made necessary by the recommendation, and overall monitoring of the implementation of the recommendation: Faculty Dean | |

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| Recommendation #4: Review equipment check out policies to make sure they are adequately meeting the needs of the students. | |
| Objective: Monitor and improve, if required, the equipment-sharing arrangement with the RTA School of Media. | |
| Timeline: Ongoing | |
| Responsibility for leading initiative: Chair of Journalism | |
| Responsibly for approving recommendation, providing any resources made necessary by the recommendation, and overall monitoring of the implementation of the recommendation: Faculty Dean | |

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| Recommendation #5: Consider giving students greater access to Mac labs and the TV and radio studios. | |
| Objective: Initiate a communication to students to inform them that they have access to many of the radio suites located in the Rogers Communications Centre. | |
| Timeline: Ongoing | |
| Responsibility for leading initiative: Chair of Journalism | |
| Responsibly for approving recommendation, providing any resources made necessary by the recommendation, and overall monitoring of the implementation of the recommendation: Faculty Dean | |

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| Recommendation #6: Consider more creative scheduling options where courses may meet more than once a week. | |
| Objective: Consider creative scheduling options and continue the use of in-house video tutorials to teach technology and some journalism skills to supplement classroom lectures and workshops, and, continue the implementation of on-line courses (the first, an elective, was offered Winter 2017, and the second, a mandatory course, will be offered Fall 2017). | |
| Timeline: Ongoing | |
| Responsibility for leading initiative: Chair of Journalism | |
| Responsibly for approving recommendation, providing any resources made necessary by the recommendation, and overall monitoring of the implementation of the recommendation: Faculty Dean | |

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| Recommendation #7: Consider the additional seven (7) recommendations outlined in the self study and take action as required. | |
| Objective: Act upon the additional recommendations outlined in the self study: | |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop curriculum that serves diverse student aspirations and makes the learning experience of marginalized groups, including Aboriginal students, as inclusive as possible. 2. Make “learning journalism by doing innovative journalism for real audiences” more central to the second halves of the BJourn curricula. 3. Articulate an enhanced “value proposition” of the BJourn degree. 4. Continue to grow News Studies enrolment. 5. Find more effective means of (a) responding to students’ mental-health and academic-accommodations needs; (b) academic advising; (c) advocating for more financial resources for essential student services; and (d) predicting and making available elective course offerings. 6. Update the School’s SRC policy. 7. Continue the planning and implement of partnerships. | |
| Timeline: Ongoing | |
| Responsibility for leading initiative: Chair of Journalism | |
| 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