



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

Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan

Periodic Program Review (PPR)

Master of Journalism (MJ)

School of Journalism

Faculty of Communication and Design

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Final Assessment Report

PERIODIC PROGRAM REVIEW of the Master of Journalism (MJ) Program

In accordance with the University Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), this final assessment report provides a synthesis of the external evaluation and the internal response and assessments of the graduate program in Journalism delivered by the Department 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 who will be responsible for approving the recommendations set out in the final assessment report; who will be responsible for providing any resources entailed by those recommendations; any changes in organization, policy or governance that will be necessary to meet the recommendations and who will be responsible for acting on those recommendations; and timelines for acting on and monitoring the implementation of those recommendations.

Summary of the Periodic Program Review of the Department of Journalism Master of Journalism (MJ) Graduate Program

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

Two external and one internal arm's-length reviewers were selected from a set of proposed candidates. The Peer Review Team (PRT) for the Periodic Program Review (PPR) of the Master's program in Journalism consisted of Kelly Toughill (University of King's College), Dr. Brian Gabriel (Concordia University), and Dr. Art Blake (Ryerson University).

The appraisal committee spent two days at the Ryerson School of Journalism. The visit included interviews with the University and Faculty Administration including the Provost and Vice-President Academic; Vice-Provost Academic; Vice-Provost and Dean Yeates School of Graduate Studies (YSGS); Dean of the Faculty of Communication and Design; Chair of the Department of Journalism, Graduate Program Director of Journalism Graduate Program, and meetings with a group of current students, alumni, and, full-time faculty and support staff.

The PRT site visit was conducted from January 30 to 31, 2017. The PRT report was communicated to the Associate Dean, YSGS on February 27, 2017, and the response to the report from Journalism was communicated to YSGS on March 28, 2017.

The following strengths and weaknesses were noted. A sense of good morale and collegiality was evident during the site visit. In general, members of the committee were impressed with the School's

efforts to keep its programs relevant in an ever-changing media environment that places increasing technical and ethical demands on journalists.

The PRT cited several strengths of Journalism in their report, including its recognition as a thought leader, its support of the Journalism profession, and the quality and dedication of its faculty and staff.

Some of the weaknesses included the need for the MJ curriculum to be updated, hiring of more faculty, extending technical staff contracts, more creative course scheduling options and greater access for student studio resources.

The two programs of specific focus in their review included the four-year Bachelors in Journalism (BJ) and the two-year Master's in Journalism (MJ). This final assessment report addresses the graduate specific PRT recommendations, which are discussed below.

Summary of PRT Recommendations with Graduate Program And YSGS Responses

ACADEMIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Begin the immediate process of replacing the current MJ program

1.a. The School should overhaul the Master of Journalism curriculum.

The School recognizes the enormous challenge of reviewing and revising the curriculum but believes that work is essential for the preservation of the School's reputation as the leading Canadian journalism school.

YSGS supports the program's efforts to review and revise its curriculum, as per Policy 127. YSGS will support the program as needed for any minor or major curriculum modifications, again, as per Policy 127.

1.b. The PRT encourages the curriculum team, as it moves forward, to eliminate any curriculum silos that may inhibit the acquisition of skills in all journalistic delivery platforms.

The 'silos' are the 'platforms' of the news media: broadcast, print, magazine and online. The committee agrees with the PRT that more skills need to be delivered without concern for content that may have been previously placed in a silo and protected. Efforts should be focused toward students gathering as many core multimedia skills as possible during their two-year program.

The School of Journalism and the Graduate Curriculum Committee ('the committee') appreciates the detail of the specific recommendations for the MJ curriculum renewal and have provided detailed responses are provided below.

YSGS supports the program-level response.

1.c. The curriculum review should emphasize digital journalism, mobile journalism and include visual thinking (video, data visualization) in the core curriculum.

The PRT's advice to enrich the MJ program with more digital, data and visual journalism is well taken. Emboldened with this recommendation, the MJ committee will move quickly to address these issues.

From the MJ perspective, the School's many RFA professors and contract instructors currently provide a healthy, wide variety of journalism methodologies. However, it is also readily apparent to the MJ committee that as the School moves deeper into the digital era there is no path around the need to refresh the skills of RFA faculty members in the School.

YSGS supports the program-level response.

1.d. Revise the MJ program, but, in the interim, the School might reschedule the digital media course so that it is taken earlier in the program and innovate within existing course designs to make graduate students as multi-media savvy as possible.

The PRT's advice is timely and astute. In fact, the School has already enthusiastically adopted this specific recommendation.

YSGS supports the program-level response.

1.e. The School should consider the impact on the graduate program if applications continue to decline, and develop a response to that potential threat.

The PRT's suggestion that the School brace itself for a decline in applications to its MJ program has been heeded. The MJ committee has been discussing the goal of revising its recruitment strategy for 2018–19. Support for graduate recruitment at the FCAD level has been bolstered by the appointment of a graduate programs development assistant.

YSGS supports the program-level response. We also urge the program to consider its recruitment and communication strategy as a part of the curriculum review. The new curriculum may provide direction on the most appropriate recruitment and communication strategies.

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

As the PRT noted, the School has taken a number of initiatives that “improve the quality of the student experience.” Providing as much flexibility to students—who juggle many demands such as work, family and 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 schedule such as our in-house video tutorials to teach technology and some journalism skills to supplement classroom lectures and workshops.

YSGS supports the program-level response. YSGS notes that any changes with respect to e-learning should be considered as a part of the program's curriculum review. The program should also consider the university's overall e-learning strategies and priorities as a part of the curriculum review.

ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL RECOMMENDATIONS

3. Hire at least two new tenure-track faculty members. Further hires should occur after the School develops a hiring plan in conjunction with the graduate program curriculum review.

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 particularly with major curriculum review in the MJ program. The School has been given permission to hire one tenure-track professor to start in 2018-19.

YSGS supports the program-level response. YSGS notes, however, that any additional new faculty appointments need to be considered in the context of university- and faculty-level planning. The appointment of new faculty is outside of the purview of YSGS. The program is urged to work with the Dean of FCAD on a plan for new faculty recruitment.

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

The School agrees that 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.

To respond to the PRT recommendation, the School will develop a process to include technical staff and management to examine the workflow over the year and make adjustments if necessary and possible within the existing contracts. If it is determined that the workload is greater than what can be accomplished in the current contracts, then we would, pending budget approval, propose to extend the contracts of staff.

The School added a modest budget of \$5,000 to fiscal 2017–18 for professional development for technical and administrative staff to support them to upgrade their skills. Staff has free access to Linda.com for skills training and many have participated in various mental health initiatives at the School.

YSGS supports the program-level response.

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

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 and a number of other initiatives are ongoing in this area.

YSGS supports the program's ongoing efforts devoted to ensuring student well-being. We also note that the program should draw on the resources and support services available within FCAD and Ryerson University.

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

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.

YSGS supports the program-level response. We agree that specific attention must be given to the needs of graduate students in any equipment-sharing agreements.

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

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. The School will examine how to best communicate this information to students. This will become more urgent as a significant renovation is planned for the School's radio studio.

YSGS supports the program-level response.

Implementation Plan

ACADEMIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation	Proposed Follow-Up	Responsibility for Leading Follow Up	Timeline for Addressing Recommendation
1. Begin the immediate process of replacing the current Master of Journalism (MJ) program (see the next five specific recommendations that follow below).	The School is currently in the process of replacing its MJ program.	Graduate program director Asmaa Malik, School of Journalism	Changes will be presented to Senate in Winter 2018 for potential implementation in 2018-2019
1.a. The School should overhaul the Master of Journalism curriculum.	The School is in the process of overhauling its MJ curriculum.	Graduate program director Asmaa Malik, School of Journalism	Changes will be presented to Senate in Winter 2018 for potential implementation in 2018-2019
1.b The PRT encourages the curriculum team, as it moves forward, to eliminate any curriculum silos that may inhibit the acquisition of skills in all journalistic delivery platforms.	The revised curriculum will require students to take courses that focus on different forms of journalism – digital, live coverage and narrative – across all platforms.	Graduate program director Asmaa Malik, School of Journalism	Changes will be presented to Senate in Winter 2018 for potential implementation in 2018-2019
1.c The curriculum review should emphasize digital journalism, mobile journalism and include visual thinking (video, data visualization) in the core curriculum.	Digital journalism will be introduced early and often both through the refocusing of core courses as well as the introduction of new ones.	Graduate program director Asmaa Malik, School of Journalism	Changes will be presented to Senate in Winter 2018 for potential implementation in 2018-2019
1.d Revise the MJ program, but, in the interim, the School might reschedule the digital media course so that it is taken earlier in the program and innovate within existing course designs to make graduate students as multi-media savvy as possible.	Two currently-offered, first-semester courses – Research Methods for Journalists and The City: Reporting, Writing – have been refocused to emphasize digital reporting skills including video production, social media reporting and data journalism	Graduate program committee, School of Journalism	September 2017

	methods.		
1.e. The School should consider the impact on the graduate program if applications continue to decline, and develop a response to that potential threat.	Reaching out to undergraduate departments at Ryerson for potential candidates. Reviewing strategy at FCAD level.	Graduate program committee, School of Journalism	November 2017
2. Consider more creative scheduling options where courses may meet more than once a week.	This recommendation is currently under review.	Graduate program committee, School of Journalism	

ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation	Proposed Follow-Up	Responsibility for Leading Follow Up	Timeline for Addressing Recommendation
3. Hire at least two new tenure-track faculty members. Further hires should occur after the School develops a hiring plan in conjunction with the graduate program curriculum review.	One tenure-track opening has been posted, specifically looking for a candidate “demonstrating experience in multimedia and digital journalism, an understanding of entrepreneurialism, audience engagement and a track record of innovation and experimentation in the transforming journalism ecosystem.”	Chair Janice Neil, School of Journalism	October 2017
4. Extend the current eight-month contracts of the technical staff and seek ways to bolster their professional development opportunities.	One technical staff member has had their contract extended for the full year. Other positions are currently under review.	Chair Janice Neil, School of Journalism	May 2017

<p>5. Continue important collaborative work with ThriveRU, a program dedicated to ensuring the mental health of students.</p>	<p>The ThriveRU program continues to be an important intra-university initiative at the School of Journalism.</p>	<p>Associate professor and FCAD teaching chair Ann Rauhala, School of Journalism</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>6. Review equipment check out policies to make sure they are adequately meeting the needs of the students.</p>	<p>This recommendation is currently under review.</p>	<p>School leadership group, School of Journalism</p>	<p>Currently (10/2017) under review.</p>
<p>7. Consider giving students greater access to Mac labs and the TV and radio studios.</p>	<p>This recommendation is currently under review.</p>	<p>School leadership group, School of Journalism</p>	<p>Currently (10/2017) under review.</p>

Executive Summary

The Master of Journalism (MJ) program at Ryerson is a relatively young program by university standards. The first cohort was admitted in September 2007, and now admit approximately 27 students per year into the six-semester program. During its brief life, the program has seen important changes in technology and the approach to teaching journalism, including three major movements that have challenged journalism: a search for new business models, the social media revolution and the adoption of mobile, wireless technology as a platform not only for dissemination of news, but also for its production.

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

1. Use current professional and technical journalism skills that have been mastered through experiential learning;
2. Report various kinds of journalistic works in narrative form;
3. Create journalism with curiosity and passion in professional environments;
4. Critically analyze interviews and research in journalistic professional practice;
5. Conduct scholarly research and synthesize it for journalistic practice;
6. Apply ethical principles of journalistic practice to the work environment;
7. Make the significance the role of journalism in society and emphasize the underlying themes of journalistic practice;
8. Incorporate diverse perspectives, cultures and interests into journalistic practice;
9. Anticipate, identify and influence the various challenges and opportunities for journalism;
10. Demonstrate entrepreneurial ability to generate new journalistic forms;
11. Work on journalistic pursuits both autonomously and collaboratively;
12. Build contacts and network in the nation's journalistic capital (the GTA) and elsewhere;
13. Compete for, occupy and excel in positions of leadership;
14. Build on previous post-secondary education and experience;

To achieve these goals, the sequence of MJ courses will prepare students for the full range of challenges they can expect to encounter in their professional lives and allow them to consider their work in the context of wider ethical considerations. Given the program's objectives and resources, students enjoy balanced prospects of academic achievement and excellence in the practice of journalism. MJ students have been high-achievers at the undergraduate level, and are ready to be challenged to achieve progressively higher standards of near-professional work. Working with outstanding teachers and production specialists, students use the most current tools to produce journalism in every known form and to innovate new ones. They are immersed in the realities of diversity and the challenge of inclusion, through constant engagement with and reporting on life in one of the world's most diverse cities. Among the markers of student progress are successful completion of course credits, achievement in both internal and external internships, and steady progress toward completion of the MRP. The highest measure of success is eventual publication of MRPs in the public sphere.

Ryerson's MJ program continues to enjoy an excellent reputation among students and graduates. An overwhelming 89 percent of students who took the 2013 Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey rated the program between good and excellent as a professional/graduate degree, and student survey data and alumni surveys all show that the program has a high "recommend" rate. Chief among the program's appreciated attributes is the emphasis on studio and small class teaching and direct mentorship by highly qualified professors, contract lecturers and multimedia production specialists.

Faculty members conduct a wide range of well-received research and maintain creative practices in journalism, representing a cross-section of expertise that allows students a wide range of insight into media and communication methods and values. The Ryerson Journalism Research Centre fosters this research, and the housing of J-Source at Ryerson offers creative work opportunities related to the practice of journalism, which should, in principle, dovetail with the editorial mandate of the *Ryerson Review of Journalism*. The success of these initiatives has and will continue to result in making plain the leadership of the School in the sphere of Journalism Studies and pedagogical scholarship. Opportunities to ensure that classrooms are imbued with the results of this work should be seized. The School also plans to build connections with journalism education in Africa, through School connections with Ryerson International's South Africa initiative and Journalists for Human Rights.

Professors supervise two Major Research Projects (MRPs) per year, a substantial engagement that stretches for more than a year until the MRP is finally handed over for a review by the second reader. Professors also act as second readers for two other MRPs.

Competition for entry into the program has been stiff, though declining; in 2015, 125 candidates applied for 28 positions, down from 249 applications in 2012. The majority of these applications come from within Canada, but an average of 20 international candidates apply per year. The School extends invitations to approximately 50 students to fill the available positions. On average, nearly 95 percent of students successfully complete the program, almost all within the expected two-year period. A strong majority of students are women.

Student responses received during the self-study indicates that planning can be improved in some courses, and the program is perceived by many as inflexible. Providing more flexibility will be logistically and financially challenging as the School begins tackling the task of the program's first major curriculum review. Other priorities for development in coming years include more frequent and effective surveying, expanded multidisciplinary activity within the University, and expanded collaborations with professional outlets through internships and reporting opportunities for students.

Despite the challenges, faculty has every reason to believe that the MJ program will continue to meet with outstanding success—from a student perspective and from the point of view of forging new directions academically and professionally in the world of journalism.