

**Recommendations of the Task Force on Graduate Education  
Administration and Delivery**

## I. Introduction

The task force was established by the Provost and its membership and mandate are provided in Appendix I. The work of the task force represents the second phase in the process of reviewing and recommending change to the administration and delivery of graduate education at Ryerson.

The task force held six meetings and used as the primary basis for its deliberations the report on the first phase of the review conducted by Dr. Adel Sedra.

Our report is brief and concentrates on the task force's final recommendations to the Provost.

## II. Recommendations

### 1. Restructure the administration of graduate studies as follows:

- 1.1. The Chair of each Department<sup>1</sup> is responsible for ensuring the effective delivery of high quality academic programs. The Dean of each Faculty is responsible for all academic offerings within a given Faculty, including management of enrollment targets.
  
- 1.2. All graduate programs in a particular discipline shall be managed by the new position of the Department Associate Chair, Graduate Studies. Other titles for this position can be the current one of Program Director, or, in Schools, Associate Director, Graduate Studies, etc. In this document, we will use Associate Chair, Graduate Studies which is the most commonly used title for such position in Canadian universities. The Chair/Director of the Department/School appoints the Associate Chair, Graduate Studies and takes a leadership role in coordinating the activities of the Associate Chair within the Department/School. He/she will be responsible for all aspects of the graduate programs offered by the Department that are under his/her purview. However, it is up to the Departments and Faculties to accommodate individual program

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<sup>1</sup> In this report, "Department" refers also to School and "Department Chair" to School Director.

## **Taskforce on Graduate Education Administration and Delivery: Task Force Recommendations**

needs. For instance, in some units there may be specialized program(s) that require separate Program Director(s). The Associate Chair will work collaboratively with the Faculty Associate Dean, Graduate Studies (see below). Also, although the reporting relationship to the Dean of YSGS will cease, the Associate Chair will maintain a working relationship with YSGS, which may include serving on the YSGS Council. In the implementation of this recommendation the following issues need to be considered: the title of the position, the source of funding for the stipends, and the specific arrangements for course relief.

- 1.3. An interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary graduate program that crosses departmental boundaries but is within the disciplines covered by a particular Faculty will be managed by a Program Director reporting to the Faculty Dean or Faculty Associate Dean, Graduate Studies (acting on behalf of the Faculty Dean).
- 1.4. An interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary graduate program that crosses Faculty boundaries will be managed by a Program Director reporting to the Dean of YSGS.
- 1.5. Unless already in place, each Faculty will establish the position of Associate Dean, Graduate Studies. This position reports to the Dean of the Faculty, and the Associate Dean will be appointed by the Dean. If desired, the portfolio of the Associate Dean, Graduate Studies can include other areas such as Research. The Associate Dean, Graduate Studies will be the focal point for graduate studies in the Faculty and will act to facilitate various matters such as the establishment of new programs; obtaining approval for curriculum changes in existing programs; ensuring the University policies and procedures are followed across the Faculty; assisting in setting enrollment targets and monitoring the achievement of these targets; ensuring that common standards for graduate program delivery and administration are in place across the Faculty; managing the allocation of the Faculty scholarship funds; leading the establishment of minimum student funding packages in the Faculty; dealing with student appeals/grievances that go beyond the Departments; etc. The Associate Dean, Graduate Studies will perform these tasks in collaboration with the Associate Chairs,

## **Taskforce on Graduate Education Administration and Delivery: Task Force Recommendations**

Graduate Studies, with whom he/she should meet at regular intervals. These meetings should serve the additional purpose of spreading best practices across the Faculty. The Associate Dean, Graduate Studies acts as the liaison between the Faculty and YSGS. Also, the group of six Associate Deans can serve as a reference and liaison group for the Dean and Associate Dean of YSGS. It is envisaged that this group, chaired by the Dean of YSGS, would meet periodically and deal with both operational and policy matters related to graduate education at the University. This group can also help spread best practices in graduate studies across the University.

- 1.6. The Graduate Program Administrators will not only be based in the academic units they serve, but also will report to the Associate Chair, Graduate Studies of the unit(s) and will be fully integrated in the unit, subject to local norms. Although direct reporting to YSGS will cease, the Graduate Program Administrators will maintain a working relationship with YSGS. It is envisaged that YSGS would organize periodic meetings, perhaps once a term to update the administrators on graduate policies and procedures. YSGS will continue to be responsible for training of Graduate Program Administrators. The group of Graduate Program Administrators in each Faculty can also meet periodically, under the auspices of the Office of the Associate Dean, Graduate Studies to share information and exchange best practices across the Faculty.

## **2. Change the funding model as follows:**

- 2.1. Flow all graduate teaching funds and graduate program operating funds directly to the Faculty offering the program and through the Faculty Dean to the Department offering the program (respecting the prevailing culture in each Faculty pertaining to the way it funds its programs, that is, the degree of financial decentralization in the Faculty).

This recommendation aims to end the segregation between funding for graduate studies and other components of a Faculty budget. Also, to end the process of explicitly offering graduate courses through the “buy out” from undergraduate teaching. In simple terms, in the new regime, each Department is provided with the

## **Taskforce on Graduate Education Administration and Delivery: Task Force Recommendations**

funds needed to deliver both its undergraduate and graduate programs. It is then the responsibility of the Department Chair to use the resources provided to staff and offer all departmental programs in the best way possible.

We should emphasize that this recommendation is not about the adequacy of funding but rather the mechanism for flowing the funds. Nevertheless, when this recommendation is implemented, the issue of the funding formula needs to be considered. The current funding formula bases funding on the number of graduate courses; this practice has the potential to lead to the addition of new courses for the purpose of increasing funding. The task force also urges greater transparency in the allocation of funds.

- 2.2. Flow the graduate scholarship funds (currently totaling over \$6 million) directly to the Faculties using an appropriate formula (perhaps the current one) to distribute the funds among the Faculties, again, in a transparent manner. This allocation of funding should be done on a yearly basis (perhaps using the slip year system) to take into account the success of the programs in meeting their targets. Oversight of this process can be the responsibility of YSGS. Scholarship funding for multidisciplinary programs will continue to be managed by YSGS.

With these funds in the hands of the Faculty Dean (or the Associate Dean, Graduate Studies) and through them in the hands of Department Chairs (and their Associate Chairs, Graduate Studies) the Department can act more quickly in putting together funding packages that attract the best possible students. Here, again, transparency is needed both in distributing the student support to the Departments and in the criteria for allocating the funds to individual students. Funding packages will by necessity vary among Faculties, but one hopes that certain norms would be established within each Faculty. As mentioned earlier, it is envisaged that the Faculty Associate Dean, Graduate Studies play a leadership role in establishing these norms and criteria. It is believed that the best funding decisions are made by those closest to the students,

## **Taskforce on Graduate Education Administration and Delivery: Task Force Recommendations**

subject, of course, to the use of objective criteria, and provided the unit is large enough (i.e., this would not work well in small units).

- 2.3. As external research funding to Ryerson grows, encourage faculty members to increase the amount of research assistantships awarded to Ryerson graduate students. This will go some way to make Ryerson's graduate student funding packages more competitive with those offered by other universities.

It is also recommended that individual Faculties or programs consider setting targets for faculty support of Ryerson graduate students. Special consideration should also be given to students in interdisciplinary programs to ensure that they have equal access to RA/TA opportunities.

- 2.4. Consider extending the funding of PhD students to the fourth year of their study. As well, additional support and resources should be made available to PhD students to encourage a culture of completion.
- 2.5. The university should consider adopting a system of reducing tuition fees in the thesis or dissertation writing phase of graduate programs (that is, after a certain minimum number of terms).

### **3. Increase the number of international graduate students by:**

- 3.1. Increasing the target of international PhD students allotted to each Faculty, perhaps as soon as the issue of the unfunded domestic PhD students is resolved. International Master's students should be considered as well to account for the different circumstances of different departments/disciplines. We also recommend that additional support services for international graduate students are considered.
- 3.2. Effectively reducing the tuition fees for international students through, for instance, offering every international PhD student an additional scholarship equal to the difference between the international and domestic tuition fees, subject to local norms

and available funds. A similar formula but perhaps at a reduced rate can be applied to international Master's students.

**4. Enhance the governance effectiveness as follows:**

- 4.1. In each Faculty, the Faculty Council or its surrogate should consider and approve graduate matters in the same way it considers undergraduate matters. This should include both new graduate programs as well as curriculum changes to existing programs. This should precede the submission of graduate matters to the YSGS Council.
- 4.2. Policy 45 should be reviewed with a view of amending some of its articles so as to ensure consistency with the adopted recommendations from this report.

**5. Speed up the admissions process by:**

- 5.1. YSGS should perform a thorough review of the admissions process and develop a proposal on how to make graduate admissions process run more efficiently and faster. If more staff is needed at YSGS, at CCS, or in the Registrar's office, the case should be made by YSGS in this review. YSGS should develop a consistent and transparent system and tools for evaluating applications, especially for international students.
- 5.2. Utilizing the Associate Deans, Graduate Studies to monitor and report on the flow of the admissions process in their Faculties, and to take corrective action as required.

**6. Enhance the marketing and recruitment efforts as follows:**

- 6.1. YSGS should develop a comprehensive marketing plan including action at all levels: YSGS, Faculties, Departments, Programs, and individual faculty members.
- 6.2. Provide webpage design support to the Departments to enhance their presentation of graduate studies. Webpage design support (i.e., guidelines, templates, etc.) should also be provided to faculty members to help with their own webpages.

**7. Attend to other issues, as follows:**

- 7.1. The Dean of YSGS should consult with the Associate Deans, Graduate Studies on the best possible ways to showcase the work of graduate students in each of their Faculties.
- 7.2. The Dean of YSGS should pursue the work already started in increasing student engagement. Here, again, consultation with the Associate Deans, Graduate Studies may be helpful.
- 7.3. YSGS should take the lead in working with graduate programs to ensure that career planning and other professional development support for graduate students are enhanced.
- 7.4. YSGS should take the lead in enhancing the funds for graduate student travel. Funding for graduate student field work should be considered in areas where such funds are not available from research supervisors.
- 7.5. A review of Policy 152 should be undertaken to create a parallel appeals process for graduate and undergraduate students. Namely, we propose that graduate appeals go first to the program, then the relevant Faculty, and finally to the Senate Appeals Committee. Appeals from graduate students in interdisciplinary programs will continue to be submitted to YSGS.

**8. Recognize the evolving role of YSGS as follows:**

- 8.1. YSGS should develop a statement of its mission articulating its evolved role and the various services it provides. To assist in this regard, the following section provides some suggestions.
- 8.2. In correspondence with its new role, YSGS should restructure its organization and, if needed, submit a request to the Provost for additional resources.



### III. The Role of YSGS Going Forward

In this new structure what would be the role of YSGS? In this section we provide a few suggestions, and invite the Dean of YSGS to provide a fulsome statement on the evolved role of the School.

1. YSGS remains the champion of and advocate for graduate studies and graduate students at the highest levels of University administration.
2. YSGS remains in charge of ensuring that existing policies are adhered to and that new policies and procedures are developed as needed.
3. YSGS will continue in its role of communication with and supporting the work of graduate program directors (now, replaced by Associate Chairs, Graduate Studies).
4. YSGS continues to administer the program review and quality assurance process.
5. YSGS remains the representative of Ryerson in all provincial, national, and international bodies dealing with graduate studies.
6. YSGS remains in charge of supporting the development of new graduate programs.
7. YSGS continues to run the admissions process. However, there needs to be a closer working relationship with the Faculties to ensure that admission offers are made in a timely fashion and that excellent applicants are not lost.
8. YSGS will function as the operating Faculty for interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary programs that cross Faculty boundaries. It will also play an activist role in encouraging the emergence of more such programs.
9. YSGS, through the YSGS Council, will continue to play a key role in the governance of graduate education at Ryerson.
10. YSGS will continue to play a leadership role in educating faculty, staff, and students on the various policies and procedures governing graduate studies at Ryerson. This

## **Taskforce on Graduate Education Administration and Delivery: Task Force Recommendations**

should include the provision of seminars/workshops on such important topics as “Academic Integrity,” “Best practices in graduate supervision,” and “Dealing with intellectual property.”

11. YSGS will continue to coordinate the process of preparing candidate lists for major external scholarships, such as those offered by NSERC, SSHRC, and the OGS.
12. YSGS will continue to deal with graduate student appeals, grievances, etc. particular to interdisciplinary programs.
13. YSGS will play an enhanced and a coordinating role in the marketing of graduate programs and the recruiting of graduate students.
14. YSGS will play a facilitative role in establishing international agreements on innovative mechanisms for collaboration with foreign universities including dual degrees.
15. YSGS will continue its role in acting as a point of contact to and building the community of graduate students
16. YSGS will continue to manage the approval of graduate faculty membership.

## **IV. Concluding Remarks**

As a final remark, the task force suggests that a change in the title of the position of Dean, Graduate Studies to Vice Provost, Graduate Studies be considered as a way to reflect the different role and responsibilities of this position, as compared to other decanal positions.

## Appendices

### Appendix I – Terms of Reference

#### ***Background***

Graduate education plays a critical role in Ryerson University's growing reputation as a model 21st century comprehensive university. For just over a decade the major focus was in establishing the foundation and infrastructure that resulted in the creation of 36 master's and 13 doctoral programs. As we await the Province's announcement of a sector-wide plan for graduate expansion in Ontario, the time is opportune for considering whether the structures, processes, and policies that were put into place in our building years are appropriate for our present maturation and potential expansion phase.

#### ***Objectives and description of work***

The overarching goals of this review are to ensure that:

- graduate education is embedded as a core and shared priority at all levels of our institution;
- the capacity for delivering and administering graduate education is consistent with Ryerson's brand for innovation and cutting-edge approaches; and
- Ryerson be the in-demand destination of choice for highly qualified domestic and international students.

To achieve these aims, the Provost is establishing a Task Force that will look at a full range of areas specific to the delivery of graduate education. This includes, but is not limited to the following questions:

- Is our funding model appropriate for our present context? What other options might better serve our needs?
- How does our staffing complement for functions such as admissions and recruitment, awards and scholarships, marketing and communication, and student services compare to sector-wide norms?
- Is the operational structure at the program level (e.g., the inter-face between chairs and graduate program directors; the role of graduate program administrators) consistent with integrated and synergistic delivery and administration? If not, what are alternative models of best practice?

## **Taskforce on Graduate Education Administration and Delivery: Task Force Recommendations**

- What is the best model for promoting and advancing the linkages between research/innovation and graduate education? How does this relate to funding and support for doctoral students and post-doctoral fellows in particular?
- How can the link between internationalization in graduate education and Ryerson's international strategy be optimized?
- What is the best approach for showcasing student success and encouraging student engagement?
- What is the optimal balance between the breadth and depth of programs?
- How can Ryerson enhance its complement of, and competitiveness in, attracting high quality graduate students?

The review process will include two phases:

### *Phase I*

Phase I will be undertaken by an external expert with broad experience in Ontario graduate education. In conducting the review, there will be community wide consultation with individuals and groups involved in graduate education (e.g., students, faculty, Deans, chairs, graduate program directors, staff). The resulting report will be presented to the Provost. The report will then be shared with the Dean of YSGS, and the committee who will undertake Phase II of the assessment.

### *Phase II*

The committee will develop recommendations that address matters arising from the external examiner's report. The emphasis will be on recommending actions that are consistent with the objectives of this review stated at the outset of this document. The recommendations will be provided to the Provost for action as appropriate.

## Task Force Membership

### *Co-chairs*

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### *Members*

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