

Peer Review Report
on
the MBA-MTI and MSc-MTI Degree Programs

Ted Rogers School of Management
Ryerson University

Submitted on January 13, 2014

By

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

On December 12-13, 2013, an external review was undertaken of the activities and impact of the MBA-MTI and MSc-MTI degree programs in the Ted Rogers School of Management (TRSM). The TRSM began offering both the MBA-MTI and MSc-MTI programs in 2006, but has made several major/minor structural changes to the programs since their inception.

The objective of this review is to evaluate the academic quality of the MTI program (MBA-MTI and MSc-MTI degrees) and the capacity of the Yeates School of Graduate Studies (YSGS) and the Ted Rogers School of Management (TRSM) to deliver it in an appropriate and effective manner. The review was conducted, at the request of Dr. Jennifer Mactavish, Dean of the YSGS, by a Peer Review Team (hereafter, the PRT) consisting of three external reviewers, assisted by the internal coordinator Dr. Murtaza Haider, Associate Dean of Research and Graduate Programs, TRSM.

The PRT relied on a number of sources of information such as:

- 1) Self-Study Reports, prepared by the TRSM, describing the context, mandate, strategy, internal assessment, and accomplishments of the MBA-MTI and MSc-MTI programs.
- 2) Documents requested by the PRT during the site visit, including the TRSM Organizational Chart (informal), copies of MBA major research papers (MRPs), copy of an MSc thesis, and a summary of the AACSB report.
- 2) Interviews with key stakeholders within and outside the TRSM community. In particular, the PRT met with the following list of academic administrators, faculty/program representatives, student groups, employers, and other relevant personnel:
 - Dr. Mohamed Lachemi, Provost and Vice-President Academic
 - Dr. Jennifer Mactavish, Dean of the Yeates School of Graduate Studies (YSGS)
 - Dr. Steven Murphy, Dean of the Ted Rogers School of Management (TRSM)
 - Dr. Anthony Bonato, Associate Dean, YSGS
 - Dr. Murtaza Haider, Associate Dean of Research and Graduate Programs, TRSM
 - Dr. Kim Bates, Director, MBA-MTI program, TRSM
 - Dr. Dale Carl, Director of Graduate Students, TRSM
 - Dr. Deborah Fels, Director Emeritus, MSc-MTI, TRSM
 - MBA-MTI Faculty: Dr. Ron Babin, Dr. Asher Alkoby, Dr. Jim Tiessen, Dr. Gerald Hunt, Dr. Scott Anderson, Dr. Ken Grant
 - Full-time MBA-MTI Students: Nik Blumish, Katherine French, Michael Murphy, Peter Myers
 - MSc Students and Part-time MBA-MTI Students: Greg Dolinar, Parisa Lak, Zaker Khan, Malcolm Desousa, Peter McLaren
 - TRSM Careers & Employer Partnerships Centre: Anthony Hopkins, Director; Nicole Ducommun, Manager; Wayne McFarlane, Executive-in-Residence

- Employers of MBA-MTI and MMSc Graduates: John Coll, Chris Latendresse, Charles Segal; Chris and Charles are also MBA-MTI alumni.
- MBA-MTI and MMSc Alumni: Yao Zhou, Sean Coates, Jaime Heinke, Sanjiv Sohal, Geoffrey Smith
- TRSM Research Faculty: Dr. Howard Lin, Dr. Fei Song, Dr. Kelly MacKay, Dr. Kathryn Bewley, Dr. Phil Walsh, Dr. Ayse Yuce, Dr. Kernaghan Webb, Dr. Hong Yu

These individual/group interviews, along with the Self-Study Reports and the additional documents provided during the site visit, provided the PRT with a sense of the programs' strengths and weaknesses, the major challenges they face, and potential future directions for positive change.

Overall, the PRT believes that the documents that were provided and the consultation opportunities it had were very helpful as they provided most of the relevant information for the review process. This report will discuss major issues relating to program learning goals and outcomes, resources and program quality measures/indicators. It will also identify strengths, weaknesses, areas/opportunities for future improvement, and make a list of recommendations for possible actions in the future.

1.2 General Comments

The TRSM, the largest academic faculty at Ryerson University, is a well-functioning school – active in student learning, research, and service to the University and the business and general community. Many faculty members in the School pursue active scholarly agendas and link to other units within and outside the institution, thereby raising the profiles of both the School and the institution. These efforts and attributes, we believe, should be maintained and enhanced.

The PRT felt a great sense of leadership provided by the senior administration at Ryerson University. During our separate meetings with Dr. Mohamed Lachemi, Dr. Jennifer Mactavish and Dr. Steven Murphy, we were able to witness the highest form of commitment and dedication to student learning, academic/professional research, and community engagement. Strong enthusiasm was also shown from the faculty, staff and students, for making the institution a better place through the 'can-do' approach and 'continuous improvement' way of thinking. The PRT also sensed a strong student-centered focus embedded in the MBA and MMSc degree curricula.

The Self-Study Report on each of the two graduate programs identifies its goals/objectives and the strengths that have made positive contributions to the university community as well as the business/general community in the areas of teaching/student learning, research and service. The documents also identify the challenges that the School currently faces such as uncertainties in future enrolments in the two graduate degree programs, inability to offer core/elective courses in a certain area (i.e., media), insufficient resources for program advertisement/promotion, and uncertainties in positioning itself as the right education provider for the marketplace in the future. The documents were especially helpful as a starting point for our review process in understanding the developmental history, the academic quality, and the current status of each of the two programs, in terms of strength and weakness as well as future development planning.

The PRT finds the current hierarchical structure of the three graduate degrees in the TRSM confusing with respect to the MTI major, i.e., MBA-G, MBA-MTI and MMSc-MTI degrees are listed under the two programs (MBA and MTI). It also notes that the MMSc degree program has not been clearly branded and promoted to the right audience (i.e., appropriate market segment).

Overall the PRT was impressed by the breadth and depth of the educational and teaching activities with respect to the MBA-MTI and MMSc-MTI degree programs. The dedication and enthusiasm exhibited by most members of the faculty, staff and students were clearly evident throughout our visit.

Our report will identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges of each of the two degree programs and focuses on recommendations to further improve the educational and research mission, goals and visibility of the TRSM. It should be noted that the PRT was provided with a plethora of information in a short period of time and it might not have addressed all issues in this report. Every effort was placed in addressing important issues that we think have a broader implication in the operation and success of the degrees.

2. General Issues

2.1 Learning Goals and Outcomes:

The learning goals of the two degree programs were clear and consistent with the degree-level expectations and Ryerson's mission and academic plan. The learning outcomes were aligned with degree-level expectations with a minor caution noted with respect to the major research project (MRP) and thesis option within the MBA-MTI. The expectation that a Master's thesis could be completed in a single term may be unrealistic. As no MBA-MTI students to date have completed this option, it is not possible to assess the outcomes. With respect to the MRP, a review of the procedures and outcomes suggest that the MRPs are not necessarily as linked to the Internship as expected and the outcomes are more closely aligned to that of a project or case study.

The admission requirements for both degrees are aligned with the learning outcomes and those of the competition. The low quality of the MMSc applicants has been addressed with a temporary suspension of admissions and the anticipation of this review.

The MBA-MTI serves a current niche which is appreciated by students and employers and is exhibited in the learning outcomes of the program. The innovation within the MMSc can be attributed to the excellent faculty teaching and supervising within the program.

Learning goals are effectively and consistently measured.

2.2 Resources:

The MBA-MTI degree seems well resourced, with students expressing satisfaction with the support, their connections with the community and the extra-curricular activities provided by the TRSM. Low enrolment has restricted course offerings, which have limited the opportunity for

students to pursue the specialization or electives of their choice. Conversely, students expressed great appreciation of the small class sizes. Faculty expressed frustration at being expected to teach MBA courses as overload. Some faculty indicated that this prohibits them from teaching in the MBA program since they require some time for research activities, despite their expectations of being able to teach at the graduate level at the time of their employment.

In terms of MMSc related resources, students expressed confusion with respect to what administrative support was available as well as perceptions of limited funding.

2.3 Quality Indicators:

All indicators (faculty, students, alumni and employers) attest that MBA-MTI and MMSc-MTI are high-quality degrees producing graduates who are well respected in the workplace.

The TRSM as well as Ryerson University has a good vision/mission and has a clear understanding of its mandate and future plans for continuous improvement. The administration offers a great leadership to the students, faculty and staff. The students in the MBA-MTI degree program genuinely believe that they are receiving great academic education and real-life learning experience from their programs within and outside of the classroom.

Although this belief is generally shared by MMSc-MTI students, the emphasis placed on the MBA-MTI program coupled with the low enrolments in the MMSc-MTI seem to be such that these students feel somewhat isolated.

2.4 Learning/Working Environment:

The «esprit de corps» prevailing throughout the TRSM's faculty, students and staff is most certainly its greatest asset. The high level of pride the PRT felt in all people interviewed and their dynamism are something that need to be preserved and nurtured. The TRSM is an open-minded, diverse place for faculty research and student learning. The faculty members are encouraged to do collaborative and interdisciplinary research and actively engage in student learning through various experiential learning tools/activities.

The TRSM working with the Office of Graduate Studies and the Office of Research Services provides its faculty and graduate students with good research support.

3 MBA-MTI Degree Program

The PRT was impressed with the dedication of the administration, faculty and staff of the MBA-MTI degree program as well as the pride of the students and alumni. All students and alumni noted the quality of the faculty. Employers were similarly impressed with the quality of the graduates from this program. The reputation of the program, although very limited, was overwhelmingly positive. Low enrolments and confusion with respect to distinction from the MBA Global suggest that there is a great opportunity to build on this budding reputation, while ensuring the viability of the program in the interim.

3.1 Strengths:

- The students and alumni of the program expressed deep pride in their degrees.
- The deep connections between Ryerson and the TRSM with the business community are exceptional. This is well appreciated by the students and is exemplified by the internship and employment rates.
- The degree has an excellent reputation with employers.
- The reputation of Ryerson University in the domain of technology and innovation (and digital media in particular) is a significant draw to the MBA-MTI program.
- The specialized niche of the degree fills a need in industry.
- The faculty, staff and administration of the program are dedicated and serve the students very well.
- The MRP option is appreciated by students as an opportunity to solve real-world problems through application of their knowledge and expertise. Employers similarly appreciate the MRP as an opportunity to have a student work on an area of need.

3.2 Weaknesses:

- The low enrolment in the degree limits resources and course selections.
- The specialized niche of the degree limits the scope of applicants.
- The two MBA degree programs provide competition with one another. Given the relative strength of the MBA Global, the MBA-MTI is at a disadvantage.
- The current structure of graduate programs at the TRSM leads to confusion (exhibited by students, faculty, and staff) and hinders the potential synergies between the two MBA programs.
- The low number of available electives as well as the inability to offer a complete slate of courses required for some specializations hampers the quality of the degree, the satisfaction of students, and the reputation of the YSGS and the TRSM.
- The thesis option is designed to have equal weight as the internship and MRP and is expected to be completed within one term. No students have yet completed the thesis option.
- The MRP and internship are combined in one course, but are not necessarily connected in practice. As the MRP is considered to be research-based, time constraints necessitate beginning work on a proposal in the first term. This results in proposals that are not related to internships. Students consider this to be stressful and a waste of an opportunity to work on an employer-specific problem.

- Employers expressed concern about the amount of time students spend on their MRP towards the end of the internship – particularly when the project is not relevant to the employer.
- The sample of MRPs did not reflect a major research project but rather case studies or simply projects.
- Under the current structure, it seems that an MTI student can specialize in one of the MBA Global areas – this compounds the confusion (one such student attended the meeting).
- There was some feeling from the students of differing standards/quality between the two MBA programs.
- The cost of the program for international students is very low, compared to the competition, and tuition does not cover the lack of government funding. As such, the TRSM is effectively subsidizing international students and this may serve to limit motivation to grow the representation of international students in the MBA-MTI program.

3.3 Opportunities:

- Ryerson’s reputation and established track record in innovation and media (e.g. the School of Media and the digital media zone) offer opportunities for cooperation. Although efforts are made to provide current students with the opportunity to take courses in other schools or faculties, and thereby satisfy the requirements of their specializations, this is done on an ad-hoc basis and is often impossible due to scheduling conflicts.
- Ryerson’s MBA programs are very cost-effective; even with a moderate increase in international tuition, Ryerson can continue to compete as an affordable alternative.
- The MBA Global is of good size and reputation and should be leveraged.
- Careful and selective GMAT waivers on an individual basis could be used to attract high quality candidates, i.e., people with very high GPA or with significant managerial work experience.

3.4 Development Plan:

The development plan for the MBA-MTI degree included twelve points. The following four are in line with the recommendations of the PRT:

- Consider merging the two MBA programs while maintaining the specializations in MTI.
- Allow all faculty to include MBA courses as part of their normal teaching load (i.e., onload).
- Increase international tuition fees to at a minimum equal revenues generated by domestic Basic Income Units (BIUs).
- Allow the TRSM to do the first review of applicants before forwarding initial recommendations to the YSGS.

The following six proposals would have positive implications for the MBA and the TRSM, and should be explored further:

- Increase scholarships and fellowships.
- Investigate options to engage highly qualified professionals to teach MBA courses.
- Re-evaluate administrative support required to run the MBA programs
- Explore options to minimize time required to offer new specializations and retire old ones.

- Establish means for scheduling MBA courses in larger lecture halls.
- Increase MBA budget.

Under the current structure and enrolment, resource constraints have made the specialization in media unviable, lending to a recommendation to eliminate this specialization. However, the unqualified and unanimous support of students, alumni and employers for this specialization and its strategic alignment with that of the University and its reputation, suggest that all avenues be explored for its continuation.

Although most MBA programs do waive the GMAT for exceptional candidates, this should be done informally and on a case-by-case basis. An official and public waiver of the GMAT may harm the reputation of the program and the School.

3.5 Peer Review Team Recommendations:

The Peer Review Team (PRT) would like to make the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Combine the two MBA degree programs (i.e., MBA-G and MBA-MTI) under one administrative program. This will maximize the synergies between the two degrees.

Recommendation 2: Consider merging the two MBA programs, while keeping the unique specializations in the MBA-MTI.

Recommendation 3: Seek formal course sharing agreements with the School of Media (and others) to incorporate unique strengths of the university into the MBA programs.

Recommendation 4: Eliminate the thesis option from the MBA degree requirements.

Recommendation 5: Consider unlinking the MRP from the Internship or solidify the link and reduce the required lead-time by converting the MRP requirements into that of a project or case study. This is more in keeping with the actual MRPs being produced and should significantly reduce the required lead-time for students as well as the time commitment of faculty supervisors who could instead be supervising MMSc theses (see MMSc below).

Recommendation 6: Include MBA courses as part of the normal teaching load (i.e., onload) for all faculty teaching in the MBA programs.

Recommendation 7: Increase international tuition fees to a minimum of that gained for each domestic BIU.

Recommendation 8: Allow the TRSM to have early contact with applicants by doing the initial review of applicants before forwarding recommendations to the YSGS. The YSGS would retain control of the final admissions decisions.

Recommendation 9: Maintain the GMAT as part of the MBA admission requirements but allow informal exceptions for those with significant work experience or superior academic records.

4 MMSc-MTI Degree Program

The PRT was greatly impressed with both the quality and the enthusiasm of the Research faculty at the TRSM. The School enjoys the factors of a potentially highly successful Research Master's degree that builds on the quality of the current degree, the expertise of all TRSM faculty, and connections to industry, which provide real-world problems for research.

4.1 Strengths:

- The high quality of the faculty at the TRSM provides an underlying theme to all discussions with students and alumni.
- The research faculty in a broad range of disciplines are open, willing and enthusiastically seeking to play a role in the MMSc degree program.
- The students and alumni are confident of the quality and proud of the degree that they have received.
- The location of the TRSM provides its students with downtown options for studying both full-time and part-time.

4.2 Weaknesses:

- The low enrolment (and suspension) of the MMSc degree, as well as the low quality of the applicants, suggests that either the program is not sufficiently reaching its target population or the target population is not sufficient to warrant such a specialized degree.
- The expected length of the degree is unclear to students and leads to confusion and dissatisfaction. Contributing to this confusion is the changes to the program, the MMSc webpage which lists the thesis as being completed during terms 3 to 4 (rather than 3 *and* 4) and the MBA-MTI thesis, which has the same requirements but is just one term long.
- The focus of the MMSc degree program on only the MTI area necessarily limits the involvement of faculty to a very small number.
- As noted above, the inclusion of the MMSc under the MBA program structure causes confusion, which may also dilute the profile of the MMSc by communicating a low priority or lack of focus on this program.
- The MMSc degree is not well profiled on the TRSM website and the information is both confusing and misleading. The MMSc page is under the banner of the Ryerson MBA, includes a prominent link to an integrative semester rather than a thesis, and links to a common application page which leads with, "Are you MBA ready?" The MMSc link on the YSGS website links to the MBA-MTI.
- The support staff job titles would suggest that they are exclusive to the MBA; student confusion and frustration would support that misperception.
- The cost of the MMSc program is much higher than other low cost research-based alternatives (i.e., Brock, Laurier) and is one of the most expensive graduate programs at Ryerson. As one student noted, "Why pay more for an MMSc, when I can get a MEng for less?"
- Although students do receive funding from faculty members, this funding is not guaranteed, is not necessarily established at admission, and is not publicized. Further, there are few TAs in the area of MTI available to the students.

- The degree name “Master of Management Science” does not reflect the true contents of the program.

4.3 Opportunities:

- Beyond the MTI group, the TRSM has a broad base of highly competent and motivated faculty with a keen interest in supervising graduate students. Many of these faculty currently supervise (and fund) students outside the TRSM.
- There are many opportunities for TAs for students in areas other than MTI.
- Even at the current price, Ryerson’s MMSc is a low-cost alternative for students in the GTA.
- The TRSM could attract more high quality candidates to the program who have already successfully written an alternative graduate admission test (i.e., the GRE).

4.4 Development Plan:

The development plan for the MMSc degree included nine main points. The following seven are in line with the recommendations of the PRT:

- Expansion to include a broader scope of specializations, including course modifications.
- Appointment of a new Director of the MMSc program.
- Development and implementation of a marketing campaign for the revised degree.
- Training of faculty for an expanded pool of supervisors.
- Dedicated space for MMSc students.
- Reduction of tuition fees to align with other non-lab-based research programs at Ryerson.
- Provision of funding to all MMSc students.

The PRT is in accordance with the proposal to change the name of the program to reflect a broader scope, but caution against the choice of “Master of Management Science”. This name may be confusing to a market where “Management Science” has a specialized meaning which refers to a field related to operation management, etc.

The final proposal, to eliminate the GMAT as a requirement for admission, should be approached with caution. Most graduate research programs in business either still require the GMAT or allow for an alternative graduate admission test such as the GRE. Officially eliminating it may serve to degrade the perceived quality of the program.

4.5 Peer Review Team Recommendations:

The Peer Review Team (PRT) would like to make the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Expand the MMSc degree program to include a broad scope of specializations by leveraging the generic core and allowing the expertise of the faculty to determine the areas of specialization for each student.

Recommendation 2: Change the name of the MMSc degree to “Master of Management” or “Master of Science in Management”.

Recommendation 3: Separate the MMSc program from the MBA programs in all promotional and advertising activities. Appoint a new Director of MMSc – currently the Associate Dean of Research & Graduate Programs assumes this position, provide a separate webpage and admissions process, and clarify staff support roles and titles. Use faculty profiles to promote the MMSc program.

Recommendation 4: Provide a funding model for all MMSc students that is transparent and offered at admission.

Recommendation 5: Include the GRE as an alternative to (not as a replacement for) the GMAT for admissions.

Recommendation 6: Clarify the realistic expected length of the MMSc program and communicate in advance with MMSc students.

Recommendation 7: Provide dedicated space for MMSc students.

Recommendation 8: Position the MMSc as a high quality research degree, supported by very high quality faculty and admit only students who well meet the admission criteria.

Recommendation 9: Consider reducing the MMSc tuition to align with other research-based graduate programs at Ryerson. If this is not possible, a substantial and very high profile student funding model should be developed to offset the premium paid by TRSM graduate students. It should be ensured that international fees are equivalent to a minimum of that gained for each domestic BIU.