

■ Yeates School of
Graduate Studies

**Response from YSGS on the
PRT Reports for the Master of Arts in Early Childhood Studies Degree Program
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The Peer Response Team for both the Periodic Reviews of the Early Childhood Studies (ECS) program consisted of Dr. Alan Pence (University of Victoria), Dr. Anna Kirova and Dr. Larry Prochner (University of Alberta). The PRT site visit was conducted over November 17 and 18, 2014. The PRT report was communicated to the Associate Dean, YSGS on December 18, 2014, and the response to the report from ECS was communicated on January 31, 2015.

As mandated by Ryerson Senate Policy 116, what follows is the YSGS-level response to both the PRT report, and the response to the report of ECS. We summarize below the recommendations and responses. We divide recommendations into two broad categories: academic and administrative. The role of YSGS is to provide direct commentary on academic matters, while making suggestions for administrative matters. For simplicity, we supply our responses (as well as a recap of the PRT recommendations and ECS responses) in the form of tables.

We begin each section with an overview of the major recommendations. In addition, while we do not directly respond to matters raised in the original report but not included in the PRT recommendation, nor to all points raised in the ECS response, we encourage further discussion and prioritization within ECS regarding these matters.

The PRT includes 7 recommendations as described below.

ACADEMIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Note: the recommendations are numbered in the order that they appeared in the PRT report (in order as bullet items), and do not reflect a priority rank in ordering. Recommendation 4 is the most important one.

Recommendation	ECS response	YSGS response
<u>Recommendation 2:</u> To create a more integrated program of studies by identifying broader topics for the 'electives' that could accommodate diverse interests. This would address student and faculty concerns that the large number of	ECS will discuss the possibility of strategically grouping electives during the Fall 2015 term. This will also include a discussion of the program's goals and conceptual framework.	YSGS supports the recommendation of the PRT, and the response of ECS.

<p>electives suggests more choice than have thus far been provided.</p>		
<p><i>Recommendation 3:</i> To add alternative methods of assessment as well as alternative methods of delivery including digital teaching and learning, which is consistent with Ryerson's Academic Plan and would increase student access to individual courses and the Master's program.</p>	<p>While graduate Faculty foster student engagement online through the use of Blackboard Discussion Boards and web logging (in password protected multi-user course blogs), we acknowledge the PRT report recommendation regarding exploring alternative methods of assessment and delivery. Faculty members will continue to strive to ensure appropriateness of delivery and methods used for the evaluation of student progress.</p>	<p>YSGS supports the recommendation of the PRT, and the response of ECS.</p>
<p><i>Recommendation 4:</i> To convert the MRP to a Master's thesis. The MRP is not providing the program with a strong and suitable base from which to develop a PhD program and should be discontinued in favour of a two-stream Thesis/non-Thesis structure. This would stream a smaller number of students who are oriented toward research, to the thesis, and the larger group of students to the course-based masters, which could stabilize enrolment numbers in elective courses.</p>	<p>Though a number of our students are entering PhD programs on the strength of their MRP and their overall performance in the program, the Faculty is in favour of exploring the possibility of moving to a thesis option. However, there are a number of factors to consider before moving in this direction. Some questions to consider are: How would a thesis and non-thesis stream differ? How different is a thesis structure from our current MRP structure? What are the implications of moving to a thesis structure for Faculty work-loading and for student choice? The PRT noted that students found it difficult to organize and complete an MRP in one year thus raising questions about the viability of completing a thesis in one year. In order to explore these possibilities more thoroughly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The PD will compile information comparing Thesis/Non-Thesis structures in other programs at Ryerson as well as across universities (Spring/Summer 2015) in order to help inform the discussion. • The Faculty will discuss this recommendation during the Fall 2015 term and, if in favour, will create a time-line for its implementation. 	<p>YSGS supports the discussion of implementing a change from an MRP to a thesis, or a hybrid model containing a thesis, MRP, or course work option. YSGS may help facilitate future discussion on this major program change, along with stakeholders in ECS and FCS. We note that major changes to the existing program such as those affecting the MRP would follow our IQAP policies.</p>

ADMINISTRATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation	ECS response	YSGS response
<p><u>Recommendation 1:</u> To update information on the School’s website including the program brochure on an on-going and timely manner to reflect current course offerings, program changes and degree requirements.</p>	<p>The website update has been initiated and students beginning the program in Fall 2015 will have updated course information.</p> <p>The web site will be updated twice a year by the Program Director (PD) and Program Assistant (PA)</p>	<p>YSGS supports the recommendation of the PRT, and the response of ECS. We will continue to work with ECS on its on- and off-line view book, and new landing page on the YSGS website.</p>
<p><u>Recommendation 5:</u> To streamline ethics approval by arranging agreements between the School and school districts, hospitals, childcare providers, etc.</p>	<p>This recommendation was not explicitly addressed in the ECS response.</p>	<p>Ethics approvals require approvals from the REB. We support the dialogue of streamlining the approvals process, although it is important to note that YSGS is not involved directly with the process.</p>
<p><u>Recommendation 6:</u> To assign supervisors for MRPs with consideration of the workload of faculty members, equity of distribution, as well as student interest. Future hiring should consider an appointment at the rank of associate professor with a track record of research and supervision, relieving junior colleagues from the responsibility of leadership in this area in their pre-tenure period.</p>	<p>The MAECS is a one year program with MRP supervision occurring during the spring/summer term (the non-teaching term for most RFA). Assigning Faculty to MRP supervision responsibilities contravenes Article 10 of the RFA Collective Agreement and will not be acted upon. MRP supervision will continue to be voluntary.</p>	<p>Faculty engagement in the program (and any graduate program at Ryerson) is a key ingredient for its ongoing success. We recognize the spirit of the recommendation of the PRT, and note that MRP supervision is not normally considered as part of an assigned workload for faculty.</p>
<p><u>Recommendation 7:</u> To encourage faculty members to continue to build their reputation, in light of the School’s desire to develop a PhD Program and in line with Strategy 21 of the Academic Plan.</p>	<p>Supports are currently in place at the Faculty- and School-levels to encourage Faculty members to continue building their research profiles. ECS Faculty have an ongoing commitment to engage MA students in their research projects through opportunities to work as research assistants</p>	<p>YSGS supports this recommendation, and will continue to work, and encourage the Faculty- and School- level supports to expand and enhance SRC of faculty engaged with the program.</p>

	<p>and carry out their MRP research within the umbrella of larger funded projects. Graduate program Faculty members teach in both the graduate and undergraduate programs. Through the ECS undergraduate program, many MAECS students build their capacity in scholarship and teaching by working as graduate teaching assistants.</p>	
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In conclusion, we thank the external reviewers and colleagues in ECS for a very thorough assessment of the strengths and challenges of the ECS program. The PRT recommendations and ECS's responses raise important points regarding the program, and the discussion of these will only have a positive development in the evolution of the program. Several recommendations focus on program delivery and administration, and there were three academic recommendations. In particular, Recommendation 4 regarding a change to a thesis option from an MRP should be carefully vetted in the context not only of the program, but also in FCS and YSGS.

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