

RYERSON UNIVERSITY

Yeates School of Graduate Studies

Final Assessment Report (FAR) and Implementation Plan for the Periodic Review of the Graduate Program in Media Production (MP)

In accordance with the University Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), a final assessment report (FAR) is required to provide an institutional synthesis of the external evaluation and internal responses and assessments of the Periodic Program Review of the graduate program in Media Production (MP). This report identifies significant strengths of the program and opportunities for program improvement and enhancement. It also sets out and prioritizes recommendations selected for implementation.

This report includes an Implementation Plan that identifies:

- Who will be responsible for approving the recommendations outlined in the final assessment report; Who will be responsible for providing any resources made necessary by the recommendations; Who will be responsible for acting on the recommendations;
- Timelines for acting on and monitoring the implementation of the recommendations.

Summary of the Periodic Program Review of the Graduate Program in MP

The graduate program in Media Production submitted a self-study report to YSGS in 2014. The report outlined the program descriptions and learning outcomes, an analytical assessment for the program, program data and the standard data packages. Course outlines and CVs for full-time faculty members were also appended.

Three external reviewers were selected:

- Douglas Barrett, BellMedia Professor of Media Management
Schulich School of Business, York University
- Amnon Buchbinder, Associate Professor of Screenwriting
Faculty of the Arts, Media, Performance and Design, York University
- David Ogborn, Associate Professor of Multimedia
Department of Communication Studies and Multimedia, McMaster University

Upon review of the MP self-study documentation they conducted a site visit to Ryerson on April 8 and 9, 2015. The Peer Review Team (PRT) interviewed a cross-section of individuals and groups, including the Provost and VP Academic, Vice-Provost Academic; Dean and Associate Dean of the Yeates School of Graduate Studies (YSGS); Associate Dean of Faculty of Communication and Design (FCAD); Graduate Program Director, School of Media Chair,; and meetings with program faculty members; students; support staff; alumni; and graduates.

The PRT report was submitted to YSGS on May 11, 2015. The PRT cited several strengths of the program in their report, ranging from the strength of the program scope, and the depth of faculty and facilities; Engagement, articulation, leadership potential, and employment of the program students and graduates; And strongly engaged and committed faculty. The PRT report includes several recommendations, which are discussed below.

Summary of the Reviewers' Recommendations with Responses from MP and YSGS

As mandated by Ryerson Senate Policy 126, what follows is the YSGS-level response to both the PRT report, and the response to the report of MP. 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. Each section begins with an overview of the major PRT 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.

Academic Recommendations

Recommendation

The MMP's objectives be re-articulated to go beyond physical media production to encompass MEDIA LEADERSHIP as defined by:

- a) storytelling;
- b) collaboration;
- c) contextual insight; and,
- d) creative management (best practices for harnessing financial and personal resources to develop and create creative products).

The Steering Committee wholeheartedly supports this recommendation. We note that this idea emerged from the discussions between the Review Committee and MPP faculty, students and alumni during the Site Visit. The Steering Committee agrees with the Review Committee that re-visioning the MMP to emphasize media leadership will best serve the goals of the program's academic community. Further, we note that the Committee finds that the MMP "has the appropriate resources, an ideal mix of faculty and facilities, and much of the curriculum already in place" to meet the need of advanced education in creative media leadership in Canada. As the program redefines itself we plan to take, as the Review Committee recommends, a fresh look at its curriculum (see below).

In light of this, the Steering Committee agrees with the Review Committee's finding that consideration be given to rebranding the MMP. A new name could more accurately reflect and communicate the MMP's curriculum and academic goals. It could also help differentiate the MMP from the undergraduate media production program and other master programs (e.g. MDM) for applicants, graduates and their potential employers in the media industry. However, the Steering Committee is mindful that such rebranding must be done in consultation with the Graduate School, FCAD and the University.

YSGS supports the recommendation of rebranding of the MMP to focus on media leadership. We think this will strengthen the program, and provided additional differentiation with other Ryerson graduate programs (such as the Masters of Digital Media) and across the sector.

Recommendation

The program's core curriculum should emphasize the leadership aspects noted above through the conceptual, managerial, aesthetic and narrative development of student projects.

Pure production technique should be the “elective” aspect that serves the project’s needs and not be the sole focus of the program. Therefore, we are persuaded by the Review Committee’s reasoning that bootcamps/workshops on technical subjects to compensate students’ uneven production backgrounds should not be expanded. At most, workshops should target specific technical challenges of individual student projects.

Recommendation

The MRPs should continue.

The MP program embraces the PRTs finding that “research projects that address significant media leadership challenges could readily and profitably take the shape of substantial written documents” (emphasis added). The faculty does remain convinced that some MRP proposals (and some projects) may be better served by other masters programs. Towards this, the MMP Director will consult with other Ryerson masters programs notably ComCult and Masters of Digital Media to ensure that applicants find the best home for their research and creativity.

YSGS agrees that the MRPs should continue. While it may be a less popular option than a project, the MRP provides an avenue to pursue research on topics of relevance to the field of Media Production.

Recommendation

A sharper focus in the core curriculum on media leadership is needed.

Whether a student completes a project or an MRP, the program curriculum should emphasize the student’s process and how that enables her to grow into a media leader. Towards this goal, instructors of the Core courses are meeting late this summer and will work with Curriculum Committee to redevelop the core curriculum.

YSGS supports the site team and program’s responses. We will work with the program to redevelop its core curriculum.

Recommendation

The MMP should maintain a strong theoretical/contextual dimension in the curriculum with an emphasis on media practice.

The program and YSGS agree with the PRT recommendation.

Recommendation

The projects be best considered as PROOF OF CONCEPT of the students’ skills in creative media leadership.

Given the mixed level of technical skills the students have on entering the program, we agree with the Review Committee’s assessment that it is ambitious for students to aspire to complete a professional caliber project in only three terms.

Therefore, the program’s emphasis should not be to achieve a specific level of technical competence in physical media production. We fully agree with the Review Committee that the MMP should develop students’ ability to collaborate and communicate with creative people who do have those skills. We share the Review Committee’s concern that the students tend to work in relative isolation. To encourage collaboration within the cohort the Director and the professor teaching the Project development course will place

this year's cohort into formal small groups who will be required to complete assignments together. This draws on the model of small groups in first year of law school and certain one year MBA programs. Through this, we hope that all students, including those doing more solitary projects like writing screenplays and MRPs, will collaborate, learn from each other and offer each other support. The Committee pointed out that collaboration with other current students "on their projects was either voluntary or self-organized." We feel there is a benefit in learning how to organize a project on your own. One of the most difficult skills to master is how to draw in other creative people to share your vision.

YSGS supports the program response. We emphasize the importance of student engagement in the program. Further, students should be encouraged to enroll in Future Smart, which is our suite of essential skills programs. Learning with relevance is a hallmark of Ryerson graduate education.

Administrative Recommendations

Recommendation

Financial assistance offered to MMP students is low relative to other similar programs across Ontario and Canada. Their Report notes that the baseline funding offered in media-related graduate programs to be upwards of \$14,000 per year including standardized teaching assistant packages for all incoming graduate students.

Funding to students presents a challenge to the MMP to attract the top candidates and we plan to work with FCAD, the Graduate School and the University to find ways to level the playing field. YSGS supports the program response and encourage faculty associated with the MPP to seek external funding that could provide stipendiary support for students in the program.

Recommendation

The program should work with Ryerson library to ensure that wherever possible the final projects and MRPs are preserved, archived digitally and available for future study.

The program and YSGS agree with this recommendation, and the program is taking steps to ensure it is accomplished.

Implementation Plan

Recommendation	Proposed Follow-up	Responsibility for Leading Follow-up	Timeline for Addressing Recommendation
Academic			
The MMP's objectives be re-articulated to go beyond physical media production to encompass MEDIA LEADERSHIP as defined by: a) storytelling; b) collaboration; c) contextual insight; and, d) creative management (best practices for harnessing financial and personal resources to develop and create creative products).	MP and YSGS support the recommendation of rebranding of the MMP to focus on media leadership as this will strengthen the program, and provided additional differentiation with other Ryerson graduate programs (such as the Masters of Digital Media) and across the sector. The Program Director working with the MMP's curriculum Steering Committee will continue to tweak the Program's courses and objectives in line with the PR recommendations. A more substantive reconsideration of the Program's objectives (and possible rebranding) meeting with MMP, YSGS, RTA Chair, the Dean of FCAD or his representative, and when appropriate the Director, Curriculum Quality Assurance of the University to discuss how this can occur, what needs to be in place, what needs to be considered.	Graduate Program Director, MMP	Winter 2016.
The program core curriculum should emphasize the leadership aspects noted through the conceptual, managerial, aesthetic and narrative development of student projects.	Pure production technique should be the "elective" aspect that serves the project's needs and not be the sole focus of the program. Therefore, we are persuaded by the PRT reasoning that boot camps / workshops on technical subjects to compensate students' uneven production backgrounds should not be expanded.	On an ongoing basis, <i>the Instructors</i> of required courses MP8102 Media Production MP8100 Project/MRP Development are already addressing this. The <i>Graduate Program Director and Chair of RTA School of Media</i> will	Fall 2015 – already in progress.

	<p>At most, workshops should target specific technical challenges of individual student projects.</p> <p>This will be done as part of the existing required courses on an as needed basis.</p>	<p>ensure that necessary resources for additional workshops beyond these two courses will be allocated.</p>	
The MRPs should continue.	<p>Both YSGS and MP also agree that the MRPs should continue.</p> <p>The faculty does remain convinced that some MRP proposals (and some projects) may be better served by other masters programs. Towards this, the MMP Director will consult with other Ryerson masters programs notably ComCult and Masters of Digital Media to ensure that applicants finds the best home for their research and creativity.</p>	Graduate Program Director, MP	Ongoing.
A sharper focus in the core curriculum on media leadership is needed.	<p>Whether a student completes a project or an MRP, the program curriculum should emphasize the student's process and how that enables her to grow into a media leader.</p> <p>Towards this goal, instructors of the Core courses are meeting late this summer and will work with Curriculum Committee to redevelop the core curriculum.</p>	Graduate Program Director, MP	<p>Initial meetings between the Graduate Program Director and the Instructors occurred in late August and early September 2015.</p> <p>The Graduate Program Director plans to schedule a follow up meeting (debrief) in January 2016 on the Fall term.</p> <p>The Curriculum Steering Committee for the MP will meet in January 2016 to begin Core course redevelopment.</p>
The MMP should maintain a strong theoretical / contextual dimension in the curriculum with an emphasis on media practice.	The program and YSGS agree with this recommendation.	n/a	n/a

<p>The projects be best considered as PROOF OF CONCEPT of the students' skills in creative media leadership.</p>	<p>Given the mixed level of technical skills the students have on entering the program, we agree with the Review Committee's assessment that it is ambitious for students to aspire to complete a professional caliber project is only three terms.</p> <p>Therefore, the program's emphasis should not be to achieve a specific level of technical competence in physical media production. We fully agree with the PRT that the MMP should develop students' ability to collaborate and communicate with creative people who do have those skills.</p> <p>We share the Review Committee's concern that the students tend to work in relative isolation.</p> <p>To encourage collaboration within the cohort the Director and the professor teaching the Project Development Course will place this year's cohort into formal small groups who will be required to complete assignments together. This draws on the model of small groups in first year of law school and certain one year MBA programs. Through this, we hope that all students, including those doing more solitary projects like writing screenplays and MRPs, will collaborate, learn from each other and offer each other support.</p> <p>The Committee pointed out that collaboration with other current students "on their projects was either voluntary or self-organized." We feel there is a</p>	<p>Graduate Program Director, MP and faculty member teaching Project Development Course.</p>	<p>The current cohort were placed into three formal small groups starting September 2015 and Instructors of the required core courses agreed to where possible have them complete any group work together in those small groups.</p>
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	benefit in learning how to organize a project on your own. One of the most difficult skills to master is how to draw in other creative people to share your vision.		
Administrative			
Financial assistance offered to MMP students is low relative to other similar programs across Ontario and Canada. Their Report notes that the baseline funding offered in media-related graduate programs to be upwards of \$14,000 per year including standardized teaching assistant packages for all incoming graduate students.	<p>Funding to students presents a challenge to the MMP to attract the top candidates and MMP plan to work with FCAD, the Graduate School and the University to find ways to level the playing field.</p> <p>The initial step is set up a meeting with YSGS and the Dean of FCAD (or their appropriate representatives) to discuss potential mechanisms and necessary resources to provide more scholarship support to MP students.</p> <p>YSGS support the program's response and encourage faculty associated with the MPP to seek external funding that could provide stipendiary support for students in the program.</p>	Graduate Program Director, MP	<p>In Fall of 2015 The MP Graduate Program Director met with the FCAD Graduate Program Directors to discuss best practices for recruiting top candidates.</p> <p>Winter 2016. Work with / lobby Chair of RTA School of Media to directly tie GA positions to Masters of Media Production. (August 2015 Voluntary requests of RTA faculty to give priority to MP students not successful.)</p> <p>Winter 2016. Set initial meeting with YSGS, FCAD, RTA & MP to discuss increased stipends / scholarships.</p>
The program should work with Ryerson library to ensure that wherever possible the final projects and MRPs are preserved, archived digitally and available for future study.	<p>The program agrees with this recommendation, and is taking steps to ensure it is accomplished.</p> <p>MP will be making a specific proposal to FCAD deanery outlining costs and resources necessary to accomplish this. MP intends to use monies promised to MP by YSGS and the University for going over target this year in enrolment.</p>	Graduate Program Director, MP	<p>December 2015 – proposal to FCAD Dean.</p> <p>Winter 2016 – meet with library. Hire students to convert past projects to digital files.</p>

MP PERIODIC PROGRAM REVIEW REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Submitted Dec 2014 with MP Self Study Report

The Masters of Arts in Media Production has successfully completed its first seven years. In the surveys conducted for this Periodic Performance Review we found that student satisfaction with the Program was fairly positive with the majority of respondents agreeing that the Program is of high quality. The students have access to excellent faculty with a wide range of experience and expertise. They use top of the line equipment for their projects. The Program's curriculum offers more choice and research opportunities for the students now than when it began. The majority of respondents felt that their masters project or paper helped further their career goals. The Masters of Arts in Media Production builds on the sixty year tradition of excellence and industry connection of the RTA School of Media (RTA). We are proud of the Program and its progress to date. But we note that there is more work to be done.

We have identified a number of areas where we can improve the Program. The Program drifted away from its original intention to be a Masters of **Media Production**. We propose to reinvigorate the program's commitment to **project-based** content creation (and phase out the major research paper option). The one-year, project-based approach is what made the Program distinct in Canada and what will sustain it in the future in the face of increased competition for highly qualified applicants. Our goal is to start with proficient media makers in September and graduate **masters** of media production a year later.

The current wide range of student skill sets remains a challenge for the Program. This may lead to unfocused teaching because students have such a wide range of needs and interests. We continue to define media broadly. However, we plan to address this concern in part by reaching out again to a more experienced applicant pool. The number of experienced media practitioners in the Program has dropped since the early years due to the renewed strength of the media industry in Ontario (although this may change with the latest wave of corporate consolidation). We have already adjusted our application process and launched a new communications strategy to reach these applicants. We are also exploring the possibility of offering a limited number of part-time spots in the Program to allow media practitioners to complete the degree in two years / six semesters. The media practitioners will bring a maturity and additional media production skills to the classroom and their colleagues' projects.

Second, all incoming students will be required to have or obtain the media production skills necessary to complete their projects. Applicants will be required to identify the skills they need to strengthen in order to complete their proposed projects in their application. Incoming students may be required to take August "bootcamps" (workshops designed to bring their skills up to speed) and additional courses in the Fall term.

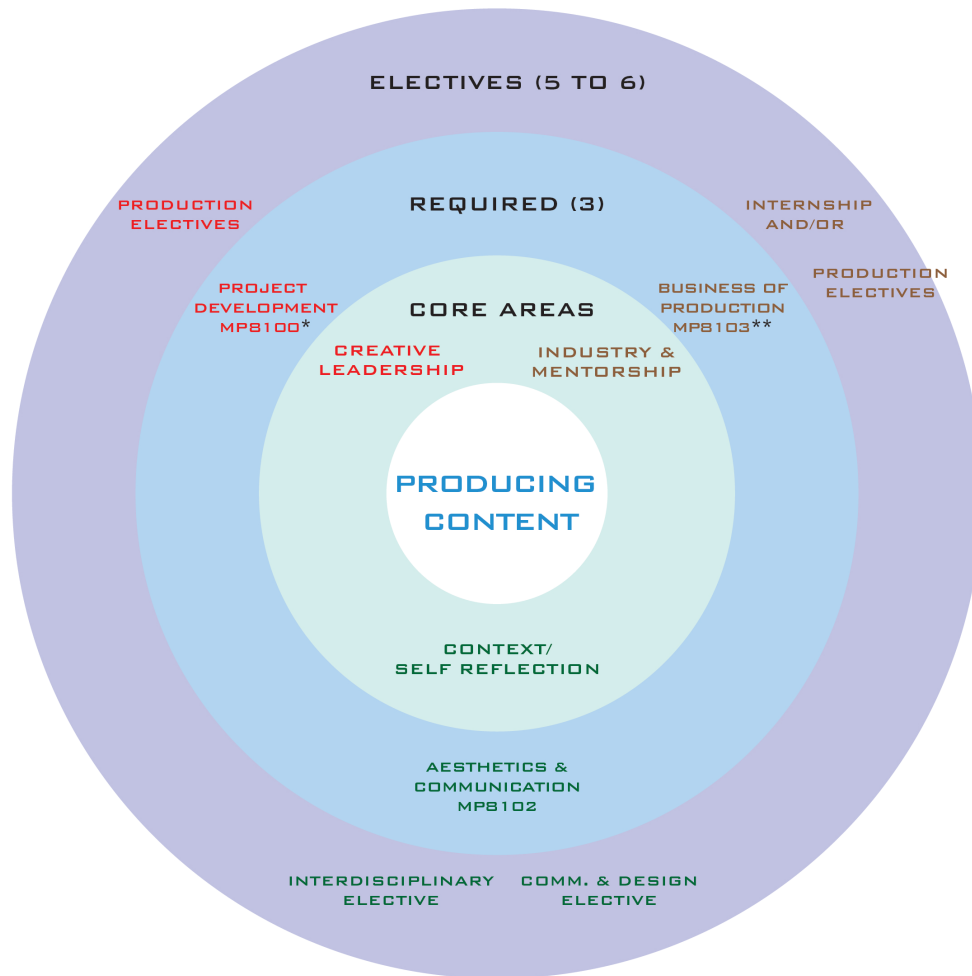
As an intense, one year, three semester Program, we must take every step necessary to enable the students to conceptualize research and physically execute their project efficiently. Required core courses and their assignments must be scrupulously geared towards the students' projects. For this reason we are combining Research Methods with the Project Development and Production courses so that the research methods learned and the resulting assignments apply directly to the students' projects. Further, by combining these courses we open up room for students to take an additional Table 3 (RTA production oriented course) to build the skills and theories they need to complete their final project. We are also considering requiring a ninth course and exploring more opportunities for students to audit additional courses to ensure that the student can draw on all the academic resources they need to complete their project.

Finally, within the Program we are closely reviewing how faculty Supervisors work with the students and are taking concrete steps to further improve that key relationship.

In conclusion, our proposals intend to put producing media content back at the heart of the Program. We have re-imagined the Program as having three core values for its students as seen in the chart below.

1. **Creative Leadership.** We intend to graduate future leaders in content creation. Our graduates will lead the way creatively and in terms of media industry management.
2. **Context / Self Reflection.** We reconfirm that our masters students must take the Communication and Design and Interdisciplinary electives to provide them with the theory and thought to put their work in wider and deeper contexts. We plan to reexamine the available electives on an ongoing basis to ensure that the theories and topics they offer are both challenging and relevant to current content creators.
3. **Industry & Mentorship** we plan to build stronger access for our students to the media industry with more experiential learning, formal industry mentorship and an Internship elective. This addresses in large part students' desire that the program advance their career aspirations more.

MASTERS OF ARTS IN MEDIA PRODUCTION CONCEPTUAL DIAGRAM



* INCLUDES QUALITATIVE
RESEARCH METHODS

** INCLUDES QUANTITATIVE
RESEARCH METHODS