

YEATES SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES (YSGS) REPORT TO SENATE
February 14, 2017

In this report the Yeates School of Graduate Studies Council (YSGS Council) brings to Senate its evaluation and recommendation on the following item:

- **Periodic Program Review Final Assessment Report for MBA Global**

YSGS Council recommends: *That Senate approve the Periodic Program Review of the MBA Global Program.*

Submitted by:



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Chair, Yeates School of Graduate Studies Council



Periodic Program Review

Master of Business Administration Global

Ted Rogers School of Management (TRSM)

FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT (FAR)

February 13, 2017

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Ted Rogers School of Management offers two MBA degrees: Master of Business Administration in the Management of Technology and Innovation (MBA-MTI) and the general Master of Business Administration known as MBA Global. The two MBA degrees offer one-year full-time programs as well as a part-time program option. They have recently admitted their ninth successive cohorts. The two programs share four of seven core courses and all elective courses are cross-listed. The five specializations in the MBA Global, Marketing, Real Estate, International Business, Human Resources, and CSR in Mining, represent a small part of the MBA market in North America where finance accounts for most students undertaking MBA specializations. This report focuses on the MBA Global.

The MBA Global has produced dozens of flourishing alumni, and its students have achieved considerable success in case competitions, which have had a significant positive impact on the reputation of both the MBA Programs. Together, Ryerson MBA Programs have been ranked within the top 10 Canadian MBA Programs by Canadian Business three years in a row¹, and were rated 92 in the world in 2015 by the *Economist*. Entrance surveys suggest that the accelerated format of delivery, the modest tuition, and career success are the primary reasons students choose the Ryerson MBA Programs. High average GMAT score of applicants, post-graduation salary increases, percentage of students placed within six months, and student satisfaction with the program are all indicative of a well-managed and efficient program that has been successful in meeting the expectations of its primary stakeholders, the MBA students. Collectively, these metrics place the Ryerson MBA Global in the top tier of Canadian MBA programs. The Ted Rogers School of Management (TRSM), including the MBA programs were accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) in 2011 and are under review for re-accreditation in 2017.

Despite these successes, the MBA Global program is experiencing significant challenges in achieving the enrollment levels envisioned at its launch. The MBA Global competes with 20 MBA programs in the Greater Toronto Area including two long time internationally ranked MBA programs at the University of Toronto and York University, along with satellite programs from other Canadian universities. Unlike the unregulated programs that charge market rate tuition that flows back to the program, the MBA Global operates within the constraints of the regulated tuition system. Due to modest tuition and lower enrolments than projected, the program has several operational and funding challenges. Nevertheless, affordability for students of modest means forms a critical element of the programs' accessibility mission, along with gender and ethnic diversity.

¹ The Ryerson MBA programs were ranked 4th in 2013, 10th in 2014, and 6th in 2015.

PEER REVIEW

The Peer Response Team for the Periodic Review of the Master of Business Administration (MBA) Global program consisted of Dr. Linda Schweitzer (Carleton University), Dr. Roy Suddaby (University of Victoria) and Dr. Cory Searcy (Ryerson University). The PRT site visit was conducted on June 20 and 21, 2016. The PRT report was communicated to the Associate Dean, YSGS on July 13, 2016, and the response to the report from MBA was communicated on September 27, 2016.

The PRT cited several strengths of the MBA in their report, citing its dedicated faculty and staff, strong student engagement and outcomes for students, its excellent location, and a high return on investment. The PRT noted that the structure of the program fits well with the overall goals of the program to provide a high-quality program that is both inclusive and accessible. The PRT report includes several recommendations, which are discussed below.

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 by MBA Global. Summarized below are program strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that were noted by the PRT. Also outlined are the PRT recommendations and YSGS and MBA Global program responses, divided into two broad categories: academic and administrative/financial as well as the implementation plan.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Strengths

The PRT identified a number of clear strengths.

- Low cost. The Program delivers a high-quality MBA for a very low price relative to its competitors. The return on investment (ROI) of the program is thus very high. We believe the high quality of the program combined with the low price make the program the best “investment” in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).
- Excellent student service and engagement. The administrators, staff, and faculty are highly committed to the Program and its students. The students are also active in promoting an inclusive and cohesive climate amongst themselves. This helps contribute to what is, by all accounts, an extremely positive student experience.
- Strong performance outcomes for students. For example, the Program has a high placement rate with an impressive improvement in salary (relative to what students earned prior to joining the Program).
- Strong commitment of the faculty and staff. Although this was mentioned above, we believe it merits reiterating given that many go above and beyond what would

normally be expected.

- Recent hires. Many of the recent faculty hires are research active and are very high performers in the classroom.
- Unique curricular features. The MRP and integrative weeks are both well-received, well-executed aspects of the Program that differentiate it from its competitors.
- Location. TRSM's downtown Toronto location is excellent. This was repeatedly noted by the faculty and students.

Weaknesses

A number of weaknesses were identified over the course of the review.

- Resource constraints. The Program is under-resourced relative to its competitors. This includes limitations with respect to both space and marketing. This appears to arise in large part from the relatively low tuition. It appears that the low cost of the Program is straining it to, or perhaps beyond, its limits, given the competitive environment.
- The "global" element of the Program. While the "global" element of the Program identity is important to students and to the marketing of the Program, it is not fully reflected in the structure and character of the Program.
- Perception of Program quality. Several faculty noted that the low cost of the MBA gives the impression of low quality. No faculty or students expressed that there was an actual issue with the quality of the Program, but that the perception is there amongst potential applicants (particularly international applicants). The resource constraints noted above make it difficult to market the impressive ROI of the Program to help overcome such perceptions.
- Elective courses. The students raised concerns regarding the availability of elective courses. There was a belief that many of the courses listed in the course calendar were not possible to actually take.
- Incomplete transition to research-oriented business school. TRSM continues to transition to a research-oriented business school. However, there appears to be a persistent cultural divide between newer, research-active faculty and older, more teaching-oriented faculty.

Opportunities

The PRT identified a number of potential opportunities for the Program to pursue:

- Location. The geographic location of the school in the heart of the GTA – one of the most culturally diverse and economically dynamic regions in the world – provides the Program with a number of opportunities. The downtown location provides the opportunity for a robust student experience, both outside the classroom and by bringing industry into the classroom. These experiences should be emphasized and leveraged, both internally with the students and in the marketing of the program.

- Program name. A key opportunity is to redefine the word “global” in a unique and interesting way. For example, this could be done in a way that is less dependent on the notion of the nation state (international) and more dependent on the growing awareness that many small and medium sized enterprises are “born global”. We believe the Program has an opportunity to occupy a strategic space in which entrepreneurship and global business intersect. Further differentiation. There are a number of opportunities in this area. For example, redefining the meaning of “global” in the Program’s context could yield differentiation possibilities as well. Pursuing this education and research identity could serve to differentiate the school as well as create a unique research identity for faculty.
- Alumni. Having been established to 10 years, the growing body of successful and satisfied alumni can now serve as ambassadors and marketers of the program.
- Population growth. The rapidly growing immigrant population in Toronto provides a number of opportunities. For example, many new Canadians may be looking for an inclusive and affordable Canadian business program. The newly approved Professional Master’s Diploma in Canadian business is a positive step in reaching this population.

Threats

Although the PRT was not explicitly asked to do so, they have also identified two key threats the Program may want to keep in mind as it moves forward:

- Increased competition. The GTA location is expected to be one of the few expanding markets in Canada. There is thus likely to be intensifying competition within the GTA for management education, particularly by increasingly specialized satellite campuses.
- Resource constraints. Resource constraints, and the concomitant potential for applicants (particularly those from outside Canada) to make an incorrect assumption that the Program is poor quality because its tuition is low, are a key ongoing threat.

SUMMARY OF THE PEER REVIEWER TEAM (PRT) RECOMMENDATIONS

Academic Recommendations

- Review and renew the curriculum of the MBA Global.
- Strategically position the MBA Global program.

Administrative and Financial Recommendations

- Calibrate the tuition. This may involve considering asking the Ministry to re-evaluate the current level of tuition. Privatizing the program would require changes that may not align with the vision of the University and the School. However, the current level of tuition is significantly lower than its proximal, Ontario and Canadian competitors.
- Embed individual capabilities in the organizational structure (specifically the MRP case coaching). There is a noted reliance on the tacit knowledge and goodwill of some individuals on faculty and staff. While the current approach is effective, we are concerned that this approach is not sustainable and we encourage the school to take steps to routinize these capabilities and distribute responsibility for them in broader institutional roles and systems.
- Implement incentives designed to nurture the emerging research culture.

YSGS AND MBA GLOBAL RESPONSES WITH IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Academic Recommendations

PRT Recommendation	MBA Global Response	MBA Global Implementation Plan and Lead	YSGS Response
Review and renew the curriculum of the MBA Global.	The program will assess the relevance of MBA specializations. Courses that are either never offered or rarely offered will be eliminated or revised.	Graduate Program Director 2016/17 to initiate curriculum review	YSGS supports the recommendation of identifying efficiencies in the set of MBA specializations and course offerings. The elimination or revision of courses will aid the program in maintaining current, sector-relevant offerings.

Strategically position the MBA Global program.	The program will conduct a market study to clarify the issues surrounding lack of differentiation (external), and then incorporate a revised curriculum to improve differentiation (internal). Based on the above results, the program will consider rebranding MBA “Global”.	Graduate Program Director 2016/17 concurrent with curriculum review	YSGS supports the proposed market study. Depending on the results of the study, a change in the name of the program to highlight its global elements might be appropriate.
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Administrative and Financial Recommendations

PRT Recommendation	MBA Global Response	MBA Global Implementation Plan and Lead	YSGS Response
Calibrate the tuition. This may involve considering asking the Ministry to re-evaluate the current level of tuition. Privatising the program would require changes that may not align with the vision of the University and the School. However, the current level of tuition is significantly lower than its proximal, Ontario and Canadian competitors.	We propose to study this issue to seek an increase in international student tuition.	Graduate Program Director 2016/17 to initiate study; Request for tuition increase 2017/18	The Board of Governors, in consultation with the UPO and YSGS, sets tuitions for graduate programs. While the issue of international student tuition is complex, we will lend support for well-researched and substantiated proposals from the program for adjustments to international student tuition.

<p>Embed individual capabilities in the organizational structure (specifically the MRP case coaching).</p> <p>There is a noted reliance on the tacit knowledge and goodwill of some individuals on faculty and staff. While the current approach is effective, we are concerned that this approach is not sustainable and we encourage the school to take steps to routinize these capabilities and distribute responsibility for them in broader institutional roles and systems.</p>	<p>We propose changes in the way that MRPs are managed including using the research methods course, MB 8600 to acquaint students with supervisors who are not course instructors. To decrease reliance on the Director of Graduate Students, more case team coaches will be recruited and mentored by the current Director.</p>	<p>Graduate Program Director</p> <p>Winter 2017</p>	<p>YSGS supports the decentralization of the organizational structure of the management of MRPs, to increase flexibility and redundancy. We encourage the broadening of the pool of case team coaches.</p> <p>Further, we request the MBA to consider the relevance of the MRP to their program, and evaluate the possibility of a course-only option.</p>
<p>Implement incentives designed to nurture the emerging research culture.</p>	<p>This is beyond the scope of the MBA Global program. The information has been provided to the Associate Dean Research; plus, a description of current efforts and a response to the perceptions raised is included in the body of this response report.</p>	<p>Associate Dean Research and Graduate Programs</p>	<p>YSGS supports the program level response.</p>

