

# YSGS report to Senate

May report for June 2020 Senate

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

## New Program Proposal

### Scriptwriting and story design (MFA)

The MFA in Scriptwriting & Story Design is a new, interdisciplinary two-year graduate program proposed by the School of Performance, the School of Image Arts, and the RTA School of Media. The program grows out of the need to incubate emerging creative voices across media, venues and platforms and a desire for greater interdisciplinary learning and teaching across the University. The new MFA program would build upon Ryerson's outstanding reputation in film, television, theatre and digital media and further enhance Ryerson's growing role within the Canadian and International creative industries.

The MFA proposal was reviewed by the Program and Planning Committee on November 13, 2019 and it was recommended that it move forward with a Peer Review Team. The peer review site visits was completed February 11th and 12th, 2020. Following the review and report, the program and YSGS responded to the comments and recommendations and those were moved through the Program and Planning committee May 11th and were approved at YSGS Council on May 14th, 2020 to move forward to the Senate.

*Motion: That Senate approve the new Masters of Fine Arts program in Scriptwriting and Story Design – Faculty of Communication and Design.*



Cory Searcy, Vice-Provost & Dean, YSGS



**Faculty of  
Communication  
& Design**

**MFA in Scriptwriting & Story Design  
Senate Proposal**

Executive Summary  
Letters of Support  
Peer Review Team (PRT) Report  
PRT Response  
Program Proposal

May 19, 2020

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The MFA in Scriptwriting & Story Design is a new, interdisciplinary two-year graduate program proposed by the School of Performance, the School of Image Arts, and the RTA School of Media. The program grows out of the need to incubate emerging creative voices across media, venues and platforms and a desire for greater interdisciplinary learning and teaching across the University. The new MFA program would build upon Ryerson's outstanding reputation in film, television, theatre and digital media and further enhance Ryerson's growing role within the Canadian and International creative industries.

The MFA will be unique and innovative: the first of its kind in Canada, and only one of among a handful graduate programs globally that teaches writing for dramatic forms spanning stage, television, film and various forms of new and expanding media. The exponential growth in visual media in the late 20th and early 21st centuries has meant a concomitant explosion in the need for dramatic content and, more specifically, a growing need for writers who create work across media. Writers are being asked to develop new forms amid the accelerating expansion of the Internet and social media, while continuing to serve the still-thriving appetite for live events, screens and interactive experiences. The nature of the dramatic storytelling industry is in a process of profound transformation.

All three contributing undergraduate programs — the schools of Image Arts, Performance and RTA Media — are recognized as national (and international) leaders in their fields. Each of these schools provides expertise to this new, shared graduate program in Scriptwriting & Story Design.

### **Administration**

In keeping with this collaborative, interdisciplinary approach, representatives from all three Schools will be involved in major decisions regarding the MFA's curriculum and administration. A program director from one of the three schools will be appointed and will work with a program administrator to coordinate the day-to-day management of the MFA. The proposed Master of Fine Arts in Scriptwriting & Story Design is under the administration of the Associate Dean, Graduate Education, FCAD.

### **Approvals**

The Letter of Intent for the MFA in Scriptwriting & Story Design is supported by the Dean, FCAD and had been approved by the Provost and VP Academic. The University Planning Office has costed the program and approved its feasibility.

Graduate Degree Learning Expectations (GDLEs) and Learning Outcomes (LOs) have been vetted by the Office of the VP Academic to meet the standards of graduate education. The MFA Scriptwriting & Story Design is on track to start accepting students in Fall 2021.

In summary, the MFA in Scriptwriting & Story Design will allow Ryerson to:

- attract top-master's level students
- cultivate a rich pool of talented and well-qualified research and graduate assistants who can develop in vital sectors of economic and creative activity
- deepen and enrich the societal impact of research through increased research-creation and SRC outputs and industry value creation
- produce high-achieving graduates who are ready for advanced positions in the Canadian and international creative industries or academia
- elevate Ryerson's reputation as a premiere destination for creative innovation in the study and production of film, television, theatre and emerging media

## Letters of Support



Office of the Dean  
Faculty of Communication and Design

October 11, 2019

Dr. Cory Searcy  
Interim Vice-Provost and Dean, Yeates School of Graduate Studies  
350 Victoria Street  
Toronto, ON M5B 2K3

Dear Interim Dean Searcy

I am writing in support of the proposed MFA in Dramatic Writing, a joint initiative among the following FCAD Schools: Image Arts, RTA Media and Performance.

This program has tremendous potential to be the first of its kind in Canada. Our nation's focus on the generation of creative content highlights the growing importance of modern dramatic narratives that can cross media. The MFA in Dramatic Writing has a visionary platform that will offer rare opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration. The success of the program rests with: the unique synergy of faculty who are leaders in their respective fields; its location in the creative hub of Toronto; and engaged students eager to develop critical and creative skills in contemporary forms of storytelling.

Resources such as student meeting rooms and appropriate writing software to support the program will be provided by FCAD. We have taken advantage of recent retirements by hiring three tenure-track faculty that will support dramatic writing, and have allocated one new position in this subject area. We are reorganizing the administration of our graduate programs so that new programs can be well-supported. I understand that the approval of the program is contingent upon reallocating unused existing masters' student funded FTE spaces.

I stand strongly in support of this proposal, which has been embraced by the Schools involved in its creation and enthusiastically recommended by all three School Councils. The MFA in Dramatic Writing would enhance Ryerson's already leading reputation in film, theatre, television and digital media, and strengthen FCAD's role as the hub of creative industries in Toronto and Canada.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charles Falzon".

Charles Falzon  
Dean, Faculty of Communication & Design

350 Victoria Street  
Office: RCC 320  
Toronto, ON, Canada M5B 2K3

t: 416.979.5000, ext. 5348

[ryerson.ca/FCAD](http://ryerson.ca/FCAD)

May 29, 2018

Dr. Jean Bruce  
Associate Dean, Graduate Education  
Faculty of Communication & Design

**Re: Proposed MFA in Dramatic Writing**

Dear Dr. Bruce:

By this letter, you and your colleagues are authorized to proceed towards the development of a full proposal for a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in Dramatic Writing. In developing this proposal, your reference point is Senate Policy #112 *Development of New Graduate and Undergraduate Programs*.

The expansion of our graduate programming is an important step in Ryerson's continuing academic evolution. Further, I think that a MFA in Dramatic Writing will align well with our academic plan. In crafting the Letter of Intent (LOI), the Program Committee has demonstrated commendable creativity, diligence and foresight.

Work remains to be done on the proposal, as is customary in this process. Below I outline two key issues to be addressed as next steps, before the proposal can be finalized and the program started. Please consider each issue carefully, and note that these include comments based on community feedback.

- **Consider a more explicit focus on diversity and ethics:** I encourage you to consider a more explicit focus on diversity and ethics in the program.
- **University Degree Level Expectations:** I remind you of the obligation to ensure that the proposal expresses clearly defined learning objectives as they relate to program goals and the University's graduate degree level expectations. For assistance in developing your own program-specific graduate degree level expectations, please contact Paola Borin or Carolyn Hoessler, Curriculum Development Consultants, Office of the Vice Provost Academic.

I also note the invitation to develop the full proposal does not imply that approval of the program is guaranteed. Any potential approval will be contingent on the availability of funded Master's spaces.

.../2

This is an important initiative for Ryerson, and I offer you every encouragement in bringing it to the implementation stage. If you have questions or concerns about developing the proposal, please contact Cory Searcy, Associate Dean, Programs, in the Yeates School of Graduate Studies. I will arrange for periodic updates, as I am most interested in seeing this venture move forward smoothly as rapidly as is reasonably possible.

Please extend my thanks and congratulations to the Program Committee for the excellent work to date.

Yours sincerely,



Michael Benarroch, PhD

- c. G. Craney, Deputy Provost and Vice Provost University Planning
- M. Moshé, Interim Vice Provost Academic
- J. Mactavish, Vice Provost and Dean, Yeates School of Graduate Studies
- C. Falzon, Dean, Faculty of Communication & Design
- C. Searcy, Associate Dean, Programs, Yeates School of Graduate Studies

**PEER REVIEW TEAM**  
**MFA IN DRAMATIC WRITING**

**Sharon McGown**

Associate Professor

Department of Theatre and Film  
University of British Columbia  
6354 Crescent Road  
Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z2

**Len Falkenstein**

Professor

Department of English  
Carleton Hall  
University of New Brunswick  
Fredericton, NB E3B 5A3

**Elizabeth Podnieks**

Professor

Department of English  
Jorgenson Hall  
Ryerson University  
350 Victoria Street  
Toronto, ON M5B 2K3

**Peer Reviewers' Report**  
**Proposed MFA in Dramatic Writing**  
**Ryerson University**

**1. OUTLINE OF THE REVIEW**

Provide an outline of the site visit. **Site Visit Dates: February 11 and 12, 2020**

- Who was interviewed?

During the site visit, the PRT met with the following administrators, staff, faculty, and students:

Dr. Cory Searcy, Dean and Vice Provost, Yeates School of Graduate Studies (YSGS); Carl Kumaradas, Interim Associate Dean of Programs, YSGS; Charles Falzon, Dean, and Dr. Jean Bruce, Associate Dean, Graduate Education, Faculty of Communication & Design (FCAD); Daniel Garcia, Graduate Program Manager (FCAD); Natalie Alvarez, School of Performance; Michal Conford, School of Image Arts; Michael Coutanche, RTA Media; Charles Davis, Associate Dean, SRC, FCAD; Ira Levine, Professor, School of Performance; Kristopher Alexander, Assistant Professor, RTA School of Media; Lia Langworthy, School of Image Arts; Natalie Ramtahal, Manager, The Catalyst; Caroline O'Brien, Chair, School of Performance; Carol Shepstone, Chief Librarian; Don Kinder, Library Teaching Chair at Ryerson and the Head of Library Learning Services; Ann Ludbrook, (MFA Library Report) Copyright and Engagement Librarian; Sarah Shelson, Manager, CIS; Janice Carbert, Operations Manager, IMA; Marie Crosta, Director of Academic Planning and Student Affairs; and FCAD students and alumni.

- What facilities were seen?

The PRT visited the following facilities:

The FCAD administrative offices; The Catalyst and Studio A/B; School of Performance SLC Space and Audible Studio; the Library and Student Learning Centre; and the Creative Innovation Studio, Open Space and School of Image Arts sound stage.

## **2. EVALUATION CRITERIA**

Reviewers are asked to provide feedback on each of the following evaluation criteria.

### **2.1 Objectives**

- Consistency and alignment of the program's learning outcomes with the institution's mission and academic plans.

The proposal for the MFA in Dramatic Writing makes clear that the program, as an interdisciplinary degree within the Faculty of Communication & Design involving the schools of Image Arts, Performance and RTA Media, is unique in Canada. The proposal provides detailed evidence that its overall aims and objectives align with Ryerson's academic goals and values, as registered in the university's Academic Plan, "Our Time to Lead."

As the proposal explains, "Ryerson University describes its mission in terms of 'high-quality, professional, and career-related education,' and 'the provision of programs of study that provide experiential education.' As a professional, production-based program with a carefully established balance of applied learning and historical/critical studies, this proposal was designed to be congruent with Ryerson's approach to education – one that combines 'theory and application and that prepares students for careers in professional fields'" (p. 7). Additionally, given the interdisciplinary nature of the degree, the proposal testifies to how the program meets the goals of the Academic Plan related to fostering an "innovation ecosystem" powered by "creative thinking across disciplines." The MFA in Dramatic Writing is well positioned to enhance Ryerson's reputation "as a creative incubator of new writing talent across all media forms" in national and international contexts (p. 7).

- Clarity and appropriateness of the program's learning outcomes in addressing the Graduate Degree Level Expectations.

The unique objectives of the program are described accordingly: "The Graduate Program in Dramatic Writing seeks to graduate writers who have a mastery of the legacy fundamentals and future possibilities of dramatic writing and who have a respect and concern for their art and the audiences who will experience it. The program's overall aim is to foster an environment where students are well-rounded and possess an agility as writers who can create in all forms of dramatic presentation" (p. 8). The proposal helpfully divides the program's objectives into nine learning outcomes: Create a dramatic piece of writing to a professional standard; Translate storytelling skills between and across a variety of media (film, television, stage, online) by developing a written dramatic form for a medium in another dramatic form; Describe, formulate and analyze key narrative structures, histories and stylistic concepts across a variety of dramaturgical and cultural contexts; Demonstrate a variety of research competencies to help guide creative practices in dramatic writing; Generate innovative methods to solve dramatic writing problems; Acknowledge the complexity of ideas, experiences and potential contribution of other approaches by respectfully listening to and responding to the critical positions of others; Embrace non-normative narratives and be willing to give voice to silenced or alternative story-telling modes; Identify forms of dramatic writing and communities of practice across media; and Articulate dramatic writing as a means of self-expression and a tool to enlighten, inform and entertain (p. 8-9).

- Appropriateness of degree nomenclature.

Given the interdisciplinary nature of the degree, and the rigorous breadth of learning outcomes as highlighted above, the PRT notes that the degree nomenclature might be revisited or revised. Specifically, while the proposed degree designation is Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in Dramatic Writing, the PRT's own assessment, coupled with input from FCAD students and alumni, suggest that "Dramatic Writing" might not appropriately convey the interdisciplinary breadth of the program. Additionally, some discussion was raised indicating that "Dramatic Writing" was confusing—for example, one student thought the title meant that Comedy would not be included, while another student thought the program was focused on playwriting (see Recommendation #3).

## **2.2 Admission requirements**

- The alignment of the program's learning outcomes with the admission requirements.

The admission requirements, consistent with those of other MFA programs, include the following criteria:

- Demonstrated capacity to undertake advanced research and practice through completion of a Bachelor of Arts (BA) or Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) in a related discipline;
- Prospective students must have an overall GPA of 3.0/4.33 (B or equivalent) in the last two years of study within a four-year undergraduate (or equivalent) bachelor's degree (p. 21).

Prospective students will also submit the following documents as part of their application package: a statement of interest (500-1000 words); Curriculum Vitae; two letters of recommendation; transcripts; and examples of work. The PRT acknowledges that the requirements as laid out in the proposal "adequately prepare incoming students to achieve the learning outcomes for the MFA degree upon graduation" (21). The PRT notes, however, that the requirements regarding the writing sample should be amended. As described in the proposal, "The admissions committee requires the submission of creative work in the form of at least one (1) script in theatre, film or video/television or equivalent digital media format (web series, etc.) to assist in evaluating the student's background" (21). However, the PRT queries if this request privileges students from particular undergraduate programs who received some training in script writing over those who did not, and further, limits the potential for applications from a more diverse group of students. For instance, students from English BA programs—an obvious pool that would be drawn to this MFA--would not likely come out of their programs with a script in hand (see Recommendation #5).

## **2.3 Structure**

- The appropriateness of the program's structure and regulations to meet specified program learning outcomes and degree level expectations.

The program's structure and regulations are appropriate to meeting the program learning outcomes and degree level expectations. The degree is "a two-year, interdisciplinary

practice-based program of study”; the curricular structure is “comprised of nine courses, plus thesis project development and completion.” Specifically, “Students would spend their first year taking courses across various forms, writing a number of scripts and plays and dramatic pieces of various lengths, and then concentrating on one form for their thesis project. The project would consist of one full-length screenplay or stage play, television script, or other dramatic script-based media iteration” (23). Adequately addressing the issue of Graduate Degree Level Expectations (GDLEs) and Learning Outcomes, the proposal affirms, “The program has three central component groups: courses, research and thesis project. As shown in Table 1 above [pp. 9-11] and Table 6 below [pp. 27-28], the program is structured in a manner that the program learning outcomes meet the master’s level GDLEs and the curriculum components work together to meet the program learning outcomes. Table 5 above [pp. 23-24] presents the breakdown of these components in the curriculum” (26).

The PRT accepts that the Tables underscore how the program learning outcomes meet the master’s level GDLEs. The PRT notes, however, that more emphasis should be placed on illuminating where in the course descriptions students will develop and hone their writing projects (see Recommendation #6).

- For graduate programs, a clear rationale for program length that ensures that the program requirements can be reasonably completed within the proposed time period.

The proposed program length is two years of full-time study. The program structure, well supported with GDLEs and Learning Outcomes Tables, indicates that indeed the program can be completed within the two-year model, as typical of many MFAs.

#### **2.4 Program Curriculum and Content**

- The effectiveness of the curriculum in reflecting the current state of the discipline or area of study.

Once confined to traditional forms of film, television, radio drama and stage, thanks to new and emerging technologies, the discipline of dramatic writing can now be applied and adapted to a rapidly growing range of new dramatic forms and modes of transmission.

The design of this curriculum, with its foundation in the classical elements of dramatic writing and its requirement to apply these elements across a range of traditional and emerging modes, reflects the state of the discipline and the area of study required to find a place within it very effectively.

- Identification of any unique curriculum or program innovations or creative components.

The most unique element in this program is its overall interdisciplinary design which combines traditional forms and techniques of dramatic writing and new and emerging forms of dramatic writing and draws from the expertise of three different and respected schools at Ryerson – Image Arts, Performance and Radio and Television Arts. The program also has unique opportunities for innovation and exploration structured into several of the courses,

in particular a course where students work with directors and actors to develop their writing, and a course where students work with emerging technologies to explore new applications for dramatic writing.

This combination should be excellent for preparing writers to find careers in dramatic writing, and to innovate new modes and applications for dramatic writing themselves.

- For research-focused graduate programs, clear indication of the nature and suitability of the major research (scholarly, research and creative) requirements for degree completion.

The major research requirement of this degree is the writing and completion of a full-length, original dramatic work as the thesis. Each of the courses also require creative research work and a component of scholarly research. These requirements are usual and suitable for a program of this nature.

- Evidence that each graduate student in the program is required to take a minimum of two-thirds of the course requirements from among graduate level courses.

All of the courses in the curriculum are at the graduate level. The final thesis project is a major research paper in the form of a completed, full length work of dramatic writing.

## **2.5 Mode of delivery**

- Comment on the appropriateness of the proposed mode(s) of delivery to meet the intended program learning outcomes and Graduate Degree Level Expectations.

The program will be delivered through lectures and seminars with a small cohort (11-14) of students who will take all of the main courses together. The courses will present a foundation in the creative and theoretical aspects of the discipline and the coursework has students applying this knowledge through individual and group assignments as well as through their own dramatic writing and project development across different platforms.

In the program design there is a strong emphasis on individual mentoring by faculty of each student both in coursework and with their thesis project and there is encouragement within the structure (through a special projects credit course) to explore and develop innovative interdisciplinary work.

These are very suitable modes of delivery for graduate learning and should guarantee positive learning outcomes and more than meet Graduate Degree Level Expectations.

## **2.6 Assessment of Teaching and Learning**

- The appropriateness of methods used to assess, document and demonstrate student achievement of the program's defined learning outcomes and Graduate Degree Level Expectations.

For assessment of teaching and learning, the program utilizes traditional academic individual

and group assignments including formal essays, presentations and analyses. However, as highly appropriate for a writing program focused on developing writers who will create original dramatic work, there is also an emphasis on assignments focused on the students' dramatic writing throughout. The combination of these two paths for assessing, documenting and demonstrating student learning will be very strong.

## **2.7 Resources**

- The appropriateness and effectiveness of the use of human, physical and financial resources, and any institutional commitment to supplement those resources, to support the program.
- Evidence that there are adequate resources to sustain quality of scholarship, research, and creative activities.
- Evidence of sufficient student financial assistance to ensure quality and numbers of students.

In this category the PRT finds that sufficient resources are for the most part in place to support the proposed program, with some concerns as noted here and in the Recommendations below.

**Human resources:** resources for administrative support for the proposed program seem adequate, though it is unclear which school support staff for the program will be housed in. The PRT commends the desire to create social supports (such as a lounge space) for the cohort of the proposed program, and was impressed with the counselling and student support services centre that will serve the program.

**Physical resources:** the PRT heard from many regarding the space crunch at Ryerson given the limited physical footprint of the university. It is also clear that there is not yet a concrete plan for what physical space(s) will be used for the program in terms of classroom and seminar room space for courses. However, given the relatively small number of students in the program and the limited demand on space for its primarily writing-centred classes, the PRT expects that an acceptable solution to meet space demands can be found. Aside from classrooms, the proposed program has more than adequate resources to draw on in terms of rehearsal rooms and studios for performance-based class components, and well-equipped technical studios and production space for the film, tv, and media components of the courses.

**Financial resources:** the university has made a strong commitment to the program for the financial support needed in terms of new hires and retirement replacements for faculty needed to staff courses, and the enthusiastic support the PRT heard from the Provost and Deans for the program are hopeful indicators that it will continue to be allocated financial resources as needed.

**Library:** one significant concern the PRT found is whether adequate library resources will be available to support the new program. Librarians cited Ryerson's low ranking in terms of overall library funding relative to similar institutions. They also noted that to support the program many new expenditures in terms of monographs, journals, DVDs, and online resources (including streaming services and databases) would ideally be made, but that currently a budget for such new expenditures is not extant. Further to this point and to

address this shortfall, see Recommendation #1. Otherwise, the PRT is confident there is evidence of sufficient resources to sustain quality of scholarship, research, and creative activities.

**Student financial assistance:** A significant area of concern for the PRT is the very high proposed annual tuition for the program of \$14,651.07 (as compared to the typical Ryerson graduate rate of \$9,200.00). At this rate, it is likely that without funding, only students from very privileged backgrounds would be able to attend the program, leading to concerns about diversity of the student cohort. While the program proposal states that students will be expected to apply for scholarships such as the Ontario Graduate Scholarship, Ontario Graduate Fellowship, and SSHRC Master's scholarships, and that funding for students will also be available in the form of graduate assistantships and research assistantships, not all students will secure scholarships, and as the PRT heard, funding for assistantships can vary considerably from year to year and is subject to other factors likely to cause varying rates of success for students in securing them. It was also noted in discussions that RA funding is often not highly lucrative in terms of dollar amounts. The PRT therefore recommends (see Recommendation #4) that the proposed tuition fee be reduced, that other forms of financial support for students be investigated or devised, and that the university commit itself to related measures for ensuring diversity of the student body for the program, including students from traditionally underrepresented and underprivileged communities.

The PRT also hopes the program committee has considered the likely effect on completion time and completion rates for the program for unfunded students who may have to work part-time jobs in order to pay their bills, and even for those working as GAs or RAs. Will students be able to complete program requirements in the desired two years while employed as assistants?

## **2.8 Faculty**

- The qualifications, appointment status and recent research (scholarly, research and creative) or professional/clinical expertise of faculty.
- The evidence of adequate numbers and quality of faculty and staff to achieve the learning outcomes of the program, of planned/anticipated class sizes, of supervision for experiential learning opportunities (if required) and of adjunct and part-time faculty;
- Evidence of participation of a sufficient number and quality of faculty to teach and/or supervise in the program.

The program proposal names and lists seven full time faculty members in the participating schools who would be available to teach courses in the program (along with several associated faculty members). The proposal states that there have been three new hires in recent years who have been strategically considered for their suitability to support the new program, and of plans for an additional tenure-track hiring specifically for the program. Current faculty members slated to teach in the program have impressive qualifications, teaching experience, and research/funding records, particularly in the areas of screenwriting for tv and film, with several faculty members from these fields well qualified to teach the new courses in the program. However, the PRT noted an absence of faculty members with considerable experience as playwrights or in the teaching of playwriting, and the lack currently of any playwriting courses in the School of Performance. For this reason, the PRT recommends (see Recommendation #3) that the priority for the upcoming tenure-track

hiring for the program be for a faculty member in the School of Performance in the area of playwriting. The new faculty member would be able to fill this gap, perhaps additionally supplemented by adjunct/contract instructors who are professional playwrights.

A related concern for the PRT, however, is that the core writing courses in this program will be interdisciplinary, covering principles of both screenwriting (and writing for digital media) and playwriting in the same course, with the same being true for the courses that cover the “business” side of screenwriting and playwriting. Given that there are marked differences in the skillsets required of a successful screenwriter and playwright owing to differences in genre, production conditions, and conventions, as well as very different realities in terms of how the professional business worlds of film/tv and theatre operate, is it feasible to expect that a specialist in either screenwriting or playwriting could teach these courses solo? The PRT queries this and encourages those who will be designing and working in the program to perhaps look to team teaching as a solution to this possible problem.

Given the relatively small size of the program, with the proposed annual cohort of 11-14, the proposed number of faculty members should be sufficient for the program. Since every student in the program will complete a thesis, requiring a supervisor and a thesis committee, the program will unavoidably add considerably to supervisory loads for faculty in these departments. However, the PRT accepts the program proposal’s statement that there will be sufficient faculty members to accommodate the needed number of supervisions. Diversity in interests among students admitted to the program will, of course, be key to avoiding certain faculty members becoming overburdened by supervisions.

## **2.9        Quality and other indicators**

- Indicators of quality including faculty, program structure and faculty research faculty (*e.g.*, qualifications, research, innovation and scholarly record; appropriateness of collective faculty expertise to contribute substantively to the proposed program)
- Evidence of a program structure and faculty research that will ensure the intellectual quality of the student experience.

**NOTE:** Reviewers are urged to avoid using references to individuals. Rather, they are asked to assess the ability of the faculty as a whole to deliver the program and to comment on the appropriateness of each of the areas of the program (fields) that the university has chosen to emphasize, in view of the expertise and scholarly productivity of the faculty.

Other than any issues or concerns noted above, the PRT has no concerns about quality relating to faculty or program structure. As noted in the previous section, faculty members who will be working in the program collectively have a very impressive research record. The PRT accepts that, as noted in the program proposal, “The SRC output of RFA members does provide evidence of a Faculty that has the capacity to ensure the intellectual quality of the student experience” (p. 41). Apart from the concern over playwriting noted in the previous section, faculty will be well-equipped to deliver the program’s courses and guide students in prospective careers. The courses and program structure are well designed to achieve the learning goals and outcomes of the program, and facilities and resources also are all more than sufficient to deliver quality results.

### 3. ANY OTHER ISSUES OR COMMENTS

N/A

### 4. SUMMARY TABLE OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- The PRT should also provide a summary of its recommendations for action to improve the quality of the proposed program.
- Any of the PRT's further recommendations for actions to improve the quality of the program, if any, distinguishing between those that the program can itself take and those that would require external action, where possible.

PRT RECOMMENDATIONS	Rationale
<p>Recommendation 1:</p> <p>The PRT wholly supports the Recommendations outlined by Ryerson's Library Report (Appendix V), as part of the MFA program proposal.</p>	<p>As stated in the Library Report (Appendix V), "Sustained financial commitment from the University is necessary to maintain the current quality of Library resources and services" (p.2).</p>
<p>Recommendation 2:</p> <p>The PRT encourages the new program to make a full-time, tenure-stream faculty hire in the School of Performance in the area of Playwriting.</p>	<p>At present, the School lacks a playwriting specialist to teach in the new program. Ideally, to teach the program's interdisciplinary courses, the new hire would also have some experience in screenwriting and familiarity with the business of both theatre and film/tv.</p>
<p>Recommendation 3:</p> <p>Consider changing the name of the program.</p>	<p>Some students in the focus group, as well as faculty on the PRT, queried whether the proposed "Dramatic Writing" appropriately conveys the interdisciplinary breadth of the program. Additionally, some discussion was raised indicating that "Dramatic Writing" was confusing—for example, one student thought the title meant that Comedy would not be included, while another student thought the program was focused on playwriting.</p>
<p>Recommendation 4:</p> <p>Consider reducing the cost of tuition to encourage economic diversity.</p>	<p>The PRT has some concerns that the high cost of tuition would prevent a diverse range of applicants.</p>

<p>Recommendation 5:</p> <p>Broaden the description of materials that can be considered for the application's required Writing Sample. Allow candidates to submit work that demonstrates their writing abilities in more diverse forms, including, but not limited to, a short story, a synopsis, a collection of poems, or a more traditional scholarly essay.</p>	<p>As it stands, applicants are asked to submit a script as a Writing Sample. The PRT feels that this request privileges students from particular undergraduate programs who received some training in script writing over those who did not, and further, limits the potential for applications from a more diverse group of students. For instance, students from English BA programs—an obvious pool that would be drawn to this MFA--would not likely come out of their programs with a script in hand.</p>
<p>Recommendation 6:</p> <p>Expand the description of the courses to underscore the writing component in the assignments.</p>	<p>While the program proposal emphasizes that writing forms a core component of student engagement, the course descriptions are vague and do not make it clear that assignments will be driven by writing opportunities.</p>

**NOTE:** The responsibility for arriving at a recommendation on the final classification of the program belongs to the Appraisal Committee. Individual reviewers are asked to refrain from making recommendations in this respect.

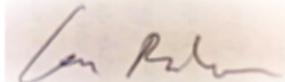
**Reviewer 1 Name:** Elizabeth Podnieks



**Signature:**

**Date:** February 24, 2020

**Reviewer 2 Name:** Len Falkenstein



**Signature:**

**Date:** Feb. 24, 2020

**Reviewer 3 Name: Sharon McGowan**

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**Signature:**

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**Date: February 24, 2020**

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## **Response from YSGS on the PRT Report for the Proposed MFA in Scriptwriting and Story Design**

**Dr. Carl Kumaradas, Associate Dean, Programs**  
**May 11, 2020**

The Peer Review Team (PRT) for the proposed MFA in Scriptwriting & Story Design consisted of Dr. Sharon McGown, Associate Professor, University of British Columbia; Dr. Len Falkenstein, Professor, University of New Brunswick; and Dr. Elizabeth Podnieks, Professor, Ryerson University.

The PRT site visit was conducted on February 11 and 12, 2020. The PRT report was communicated to the Vice Provost and Dean, Yeates School of Graduate Studies (YSGS) on February 26, 2020, and the response to the report from the graduate program and Faculty was communicated on April 6, 2020.

The PRT cited several strengths of the proposed MFA in their report, including the uniqueness of the interdisciplinary design combining traditional forms and techniques with new and emerging forms, as well as unique opportunities for innovation and exploration structured into several of the courses. The PRT report includes several recommendations, which are discussed below.

As mandated by Ryerson Senate Policy 112, what follows is the YSGS-level response to both the PRT report, and the FCAD responses to the report. We summarize the recommendations and responses below.

The role of YSGS is to provide direct commentary on academic matters, while making suggestions for administrative or financial matters. For simplicity, we supply our responses (as well as a recap of the PRT recommendations and program responses) in the form of a table.

PRT RECOMMENDATIONS

PRT Recommendation	PRT Rationale	FCAD Response	YSGS Response
<b>Recommendation 1:</b> <b>The PRT wholly supports the Recommendations outlined by Ryerson's Library Report (Appendix V), as part of the MFA program proposal.</b>	As stated in the Library Report (Appendix V), "Sustained financial commitment from the University is necessary to maintain the current quality of Library resources and services" (p.2).	We encourage the continued expansion of library materials relevant to the MFA in Scriptwriting & Story Design including scholarly texts and periodicals, databases and audio-visual resources.	YSGS supports the program response and supports its advocacy for additional library resources. YSGS notes that the university has made significant investments in the library over the last few years.  YSGS further notes, however, that decisions related to library support and acquisitions are beyond its purview.  YSGS encourages the program to work with the Dean of FCAD and the Chief Librarian to ensure adequate library resources are available to support the program.
<b>Recommendation 2:</b> <b>The PRT encourages the new program to make a full-time, tenure-stream faculty hire in the School of Performance in the area of Playwriting.</b>	At present, the School lacks a playwriting specialist to teach in the new program. Ideally, to teach the program's interdisciplinary courses, the new hire would also have some experience in screenwriting and familiarity with the business of both theatre and film/tv.	The new program is not responsible for hiring faculty members in a school or department in the university. The school or department Chair in consultation with faculty members requests new faculty hires from the Dean following retirements and expansions within a given subject area. We have discussed the possibility of a faculty position in the School of Performance in the area of playwriting and are confident this decision will be prioritized.	YSGS supports the program response.  YSGS notes, however, that the allocation of faculty positions is outside its purview.

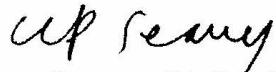
PRT Recommendation	PRT Rationale	FCAD Response	YSGS Response
<b>Recommendation 3:</b> <b>Consider changing the name of the program.</b>	<p>Some students in the focus group, as well as faculty on the PRT, queried whether the proposed “Dramatic Writing” appropriately conveys the interdisciplinary breadth of the program. Additionally, some discussion was raised indicating that “Dramatic Writing” was confusing—for example, one student thought the title meant that Comedy would not be included, while another student thought the program was focused on playwriting.</p>	<p>The name of the program has been discussed at length and we appreciate the input of the PRT. We have revised the name to Scriptwriting &amp; Story Design, which covers a broad range of possibilities that we invite in the area of fiction writing intended to be performed.</p>	<p>YSGS supports the decision to change the proposed name of the program to Scriptwriting and Story Design, recognizing that this name better represents the nature of the program.</p>
<b>Recommendation 4:</b> <b>Consider reducing the cost of tuition to encourage economic diversity.</b>	<p>The PRT has some concerns that the high cost of tuition would prevent a diverse range of applicants.</p>	<p>The tuition is set by the University Planning Office (UPO). We have had numerous discussions concerning the high cost of tuition for the program and this issue has been happily resolved: tuition for the program has been reduced</p>	<p>YSGS, after consultation with the UPO, supports the reduced fee structure for the program since it brings it in line with the fees of similar program at Ryerson and it will increase the diversity of the applicant pool to the program.</p>

PRT Recommendation	PRT Rationale	FCAD Response	YSGS Response
<p><b>Recommendation 5:</b>  <b>Broaden the description of materials that can be considered for the application's required Writing Sample. Allow candidates to submit work that demonstrates their writing abilities in more diverse forms, including, but not limited to, a short story, a synopsis, a collection of poems, or a more traditional scholarly essay.</b></p>	<p>As it stands, applicants are asked to submit a script as a Writing Sample. The PRT feels that this request privileges students from particular undergraduate programs who received some training in script writing over those who did not, and further, limits the potential for applications from a more diverse group of students. For instance, students from English BA programs—an obvious pool that would be drawn to this MFA--would not likely come out of their programs with a script in hand.</p>	<p>We have amended the writing requirement to also include the following written work:</p> <p>1 Script  OR  1-2 Story outlines  1-2 Treatments<sup>1</sup>  OR  1 each of story outline or treatment and 1 critical examination of a character or narrative.</p>	<p>YSGS fully supports this change and is able to accommodate it in the admissions process.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 6:</b>  <b>Expand the description of the courses to underscore the writing component in the assignments.</b></p>	<p>While the program proposal emphasizes that writing forms a core component of student engagement, the course descriptions are vague and do not make it clear that assignments will be driven by writing opportunities.</p>	<p>The proposal committee agrees that at this stage of development the course outlines should be fleshed out.</p>	<p>YSGS supports the program response.</p>

<sup>1</sup> A treatment is a detailed outline written in anticipation of a full script for a motion picture, radio or stage play, web or television program.

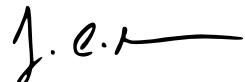
In addition to the formal recommendations above, the PRT included an additional comment on the proposal that the core writing courses will be interdisciplinary, requiring a broad skillset that will result in a challenge in finding one instructor to teach the whole course. The program responded that they will consider splitting the courses into two 6-week segments with a separate instructor in each segment, who will be an RFA member teaching it as overload or by a contract lecturer. YSGS is in full agreement with this approach.

In conclusion, we thank the external reviewers and colleagues in FCAD for a very thorough assessment of the strengths and challenges of the proposed MFA in Scriptwriting and Story Design. The PRT recommendations and Faculty responses raise important points regarding the program, and the discussion of these will only have a positive development in the evolution of the program.



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Dr. Cory Searcy  
Vice Provost & Dean  
Yeates School of Graduate Studies



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Dr. Carl Kumaradas,  
Associate Dean, Programs  
Yeates School of Graduate Studies



**Faculty of  
Communication  
& Design**

**MFA in Scriptwriting & Story Design  
Proposal**

Submitted by  
The Faculty of Communication & Design

Updated: May 7, 2020

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## 1.0 LETTER OF INTENT

### 1.1 Degree Name and Description

This document proposes to add a master's degree within the Faculty of Communication & Design involving the schools of Image Arts, Performance and RTA Media. The proposed degree designation is Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in Scriptwriting & Story Design.

#### Identification of Designated Academic Unit

MFA in Scriptwriting & Story Design  
Faculty of Communication & Design

#### Program Governance Structure

The MFA in Scriptwriting & Story Design is a Faculty of Communication & Design program. The dean of record is the Dean, Faculty of Communication and Design. As is the case with existing FCAD Master's programs, a Graduate Program Director will be appointed by the Dean, FCAD.

#### Principal Faculty Involved in the Proposal Development

The Faculty Committee responsible for this proposal was constructed to represent the FCAD schools of Image Arts, Performance and RTA. Three committee members hold the rank of Associate Professor and one holds a PhD. All would be potential professors, supervisors or advisors within the proposed MFA program.

The Proposal Development Committee includes:

- Dr. Jean Bruce, Associate Dean of Graduate Education, FCAD
- Michal Conford, School of Image Arts
- Michael Coutanche, RTA School of Media
- Sheldon Rosen, School of Performance
- Dr. Natalie Alvarez, School of Performance

### 1.2 Overlap/Integration with other Programs

The MFA in Scriptwriting & Story Design is a stand-alone program and is the first of its kind at Ryerson. The courses, research and practice expertise will be enriched by intersecting and collaborating with graduate students and faculty members across FCAD programs. Although the MFA in Scriptwriting & Story Design is interdisciplinary in nature, no significant overlap with other programs is anticipated.

The new two-year Master of Fine Arts in Scriptwriting & Story Design will be shared jointly by the Schools of Performance, Image Arts, and the RTA Media. Additionally, Ryerson's preeminence in the digital media arena, specifically the Digital Media Zone, The Catalyst and the Transmedia Zone, will be essential points of contact for new models of development and distribution of dramatic content.

A shared MFA in Scriptwriting & Story Design would create many possibilities for innovative intersections among the Performance, Film and RTA programs such as, staged screenplay readings; opportunities for theatre actors to work in film, and for filmmakers to work with theatre actors; new media portals for distribution and exhibition. The program will actively seek ways to present scripted, creative work through emerging technologies and new audience interfaces.

The proposed curriculum will also offer the possibility for students to take one of several cross-listed graduate elective courses from existing FCAD graduate programs. Electives are entirely optional.

Graduate students in the new MFA program will work as GAs for existing writing courses in the undergraduate curriculum. The schools of Performance, Image Arts and RTA Media have identified the need to strengthen the quality of writing in undergraduate courses as a core component in need of such additional support.

### **Similarity to Other Graduate Programs**

We recognize that there may appear to be some similarities between the MFA in Scriptwriting & Story Design, the MFA in Documentary Media and the Master of Arts in Media Production programs within FCAD. We believe these are better identified as synergies that exist among the three FCAD schools, which will be further facilitated by sharing the proposed MFA program. The resulting student experience cannot be offered by any other Faculty within the university.

We note that the MFA in Documentary Media offered by the School of Image Arts is distinct from the MFA in Scriptwriting & Story Design by the very nature of its focus on bringing “together students working in film, photography and new media to explore documentary forms and strategies in the making of new documentary work.”<sup>1</sup> Both programs are about storytelling, however, Documentary Media focuses on capturing image-based non-fiction and fact-based forms whereas Scriptwriting & Story Design focusses on the writing of fictional forms.

Similarly, we acknowledge that the Master of Arts in Media Production offered by the RTA School of Media has the comparable goal of challenging “students to explore traditional and innovative media forms, outlets, technologies and creative productions designed to tell compelling stories and reach diverse audiences.”<sup>2</sup> While the MA has seen students create dramatic writing thesis projects, there are two key characteristics that distinguish the MA from the MFA in Scriptwriting & Story Design. First, the MA is only one calendar year in length and, as such, any script-based thesis projects undertaken are of a format that must conform to abbreviated timelines (e.g., web series pilot). The MA in Media Production’s fundamental focus is on the methods and study of media production whereas the proposed MFA is wholly focused on the researching and creating script-based writing. Indeed, we believe that the demand for script-based thesis projects in the MA in Media Production is a clear indication of the need for a fuller MFA dedicated to producing in-depth scripts.

### **1.3 Program Details**

The MFA in Scriptwriting & Story Design is a new, interdisciplinary two-year graduate program proposed by the School of Performance, the School of Image Arts, and the RTA School of Media. The program grows out of a desire for greater interdisciplinary learning and teaching across the University, and out of the need to incubate emerging, creative voices in the art of script-based creative writing.

The exponential growth in visual media in the late 20th and early 21st centuries has meant a concomitant explosion in the need for dramatic content and, more specifically, a growing need for writers who create work across a variety of media. Writers are being asked to develop new forms amid the accelerating expansion of the Internet and social media, while continuing to serve the still-thriving appetite for media of stage and screen. The nature of storytelling industries is in a process of profound transformation, yet for all modern media the script is still the foundation for all that follows, and the core principles of creative writing remain.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ryerson.ca/documentarymedia/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ryersonta.ca/programs/ma-media-production/program-overview>

The program will be unique and innovative in Canada, and one of only a handful in all of North America that teaches writing for dramatic forms spanning stage, television, film and various forms of new and expanding media. A low-cost start-up program and powerful cross-disciplinary magnet, it could attract world-class visiting artists and quickly generate both intriguing creative content and significant new publicity for the university.

The program would build upon Ryerson's outstanding reputation in film, television, theatre and digital media and further enhance Ryerson's growing role within the Canadian and international creative industries.

### 1.3.1 Alignment with University's Plan

The overall aims and objectives of the MFA in Scriptwriting & Story Design program are consistent with the academic goals and values set out in Ryerson University's Academic Plan, "Our Time to Lead."<sup>3</sup>

Ryerson University describes its mission in terms of "high-quality, professional, and career-related education," and "the provision of programs of study that provide experiential education." As a professional, production-based program with a carefully established balance of applied learning and historical/critical studies, this proposal was designed to be congruent with Ryerson's approach to education – one that combines "theory and application and that prepares students for careers in professional fields."

The proposal also is consistent with goals set forth in the current Academic Plan, particularly its focus on overall commitment to excellence, and its priority on creating an "innovation ecosystem" powered by "creative thinking across disciplines." The MFA in Scriptwriting & Story Design, rooted in three different Schools all within the Faculty of Communication and Design (FCAD), clearly embodies these principles. It has the potential to play a significant role in the reputation enhancement of Ryerson University both nationally and internationally as a creative incubator of new writing talent across all media forms.

### Commitment to Excellence

Ryerson University "strives for the highest standards in its programs, teaching and learning, SRC activity, administration and governance." The proposed MFA in Scriptwriting & Story Design aligns with several values expressed in the university's mandate:

- **Academic Freedom:** Through its core focus on storytelling, the proposed MFA engages with and embraces freedom of thought and expression. The course sequence provides both breadth and currency to the program, enabling students to gain familiarity with critical issues in media other than their area of specialization, and the advanced theory electives ensure that students deal with contemporary theoretical and critical issues in a way that encourages them to examine and challenge traditional assumptions about writing, visual media, communication, and their relation to ideas of nationhood or culture.
- **Enterprising:** As outlined in **Proposed Curriculum**, the 'ideas' courses ensure that graduates are thoroughly experienced with the context for modern dramatic storytelling, as well as their relation to newer, interactive media hybrids. Students will explore innovative ways to develop scripts for the stage and so-called traditional media, as well as experiment with the continuing proliferation of emerging digital storytelling arenas.

### Commitment to the Whole Person

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ryerson.ca/provost/academic-plan/>

- **Collegiality:** A shared MFA in Scriptwriting & Story Design would open up interesting collaborative intersections for students, faculty and staff between the Performance, Image Arts and RTA schools. Opportunities for staged screenplay readings; for theatre actors to work in film and television; and for the writers to work with theatre actors in a studio environment are some of the immediate benefits of the program.
- **Lifelong Learning:** In this historical moment when forms of drama are extending their reach into new media, and when writers are called upon throughout their careers to cross traditional media boundaries, learning opportunities in the proposed MFA's interdisciplinary approach will both break new ground and help prepare our students to meet current and future growth projections in the creative industries.

### Commitment to Community & Inclusion

- **Community:** The furthering of professional knowledge and working skills, the creation of a supportive and participatory learning environment, and the corresponding opportunities for faculty development and curriculum enhancement are all implicit goals in every aspect of the program.

A significant factor in the development of this new program is Ryerson's location in the core of downtown Toronto. The MFA in Scriptwriting & Story Design would not only build upon Ryerson's excellent academic tradition in film and theatre and television, but also upon its physical location in the midst of Canada's largest media hub.

### Consistency with the Academic Plans of the University

The proposed MFA program in Scriptwriting & Story Design aligns closely with the aims of major university plans, including: Our Time to Lead (2014-2019), Striving for Excellence (2015-2020) and the Faculty of Communication & Design's Academic Plan (2014-2019). The proposed curricular structure also aligns with the GDLEs for graduate programs as shown through the learning outcomes in Table 1. Through course work, experiential learning activities and the development of a major dramatic thesis project, the proposed program's learning outcomes are achieved as outlined in Table 6.

#### 1.3.2 Learning Outcomes and GDLEs

The Graduate Program in Scriptwriting & Story Design seeks to graduate writers who have a mastery of the legacy fundamentals and possibilities of dramatic writing and who have a respect and concern for their art and the audiences who will experience it.

The program's overall aim is to foster an environment where students are well-rounded and possess an agility as writers who can create in all forms of dramatic presentation.

Upon completion of this program, graduates will be able to:

1. Create a script to a professional standard.
2. Translate storytelling skills between and across a variety of media (film, television, stage, online) by developing a script for another medium or form.
3. Describe, formulate and analyze key narrative structures, histories and stylistic concepts across a variety of dramaturgical and cultural contexts.

4. Demonstrate a variety of research competencies to help guide creative practices in scriptwriting and story design.
5. Generate innovative methods to solve scriptwriting and story design problems.
6. Acknowledge the complexity of ideas, experiences and potential contribution of other approaches by respectfully listening to and responding to the critical positions of others.
7. Embrace non-normative narratives and be willing to give voice to silenced or alternative story-telling modes.
8. Identify forms of scriptwriting and communities of practice across media.
9. Articulate scriptwriting as a means of self-expression and a tool to enlighten, inform and entertain.

### Mapping the Program Learning Outcomes Against the Masters GDLEs

*Table 1: Comparison of Learning Outcomes to Graduate Degree-Level Expectations*

GDLEs	<b>Master of Fine Arts Degree</b> <i>This degree is awarded to students who have demonstrated:</i>	<b>MFA in Scriptwriting &amp; Story Design:</b> Program Learning Outcomes addressing each GDLE	Evidence confirming the expectation has been achieved:
<b>1. Depth and breadth of knowledge</b>	A systematic understanding of knowledge, including, where appropriate, relevant knowledge outside the field and/or discipline, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which are at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study, or area of professional practice.	<b>LO3, LO5, LO6, LO8</b>	<b>Specific Course(s):</b> Script Analysis; <b>Elements of Dramatic Storytelling</b>  <b>Activities:</b> Presentations, papers, practice-based projects
<b>2. Research and scholarship</b>	A conceptual understanding and methodological competence that: enables a working comprehension of how established techniques of research and inquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline;	<b>LO3, LO4</b>	<b>Specific Course:</b> <b>Research Methods for Dramatic Writing</b>  <b>Activities:</b> Papers, critical analysis methodologies, presentations
	enables a critical evaluation of current research and advanced research and scholarship in the discipline or area of professional competence;	<b>LO3, LO4, LO5</b>	<b>Specific Course(s):</b> Script Analysis; <b>Research Methods for Dramatic Writing</b>  <b>Activities:</b> Review journal papers, conferences and articles

<b>GDLEs</b>	<b>Master of Fine Arts Degree</b> <i>This degree is awarded to students who have demonstrated:</i>	<b>MFA in Scriptwriting &amp; Story Design:</b> Program Learning Outcomes addressing each GDLE	Evidence confirming the expectation has been achieved:
	enables a treatment of complex issues and judgments based on established principles and techniques; and,	<b>LO6</b>	<p><b>Specific Course(s):</b> Script Analysis; <b>Contemporary Practices in Dramatic Writing</b></p> <p><b>Activities:</b> Review and analysis of current creative works</p>
	on the basis of that competence, has shown at least one of the following: development and support of a sustained argument in written form; OR originality in the application of knowledge.	<b>LO1, LO3</b>	<p><b>Specific Course(s):</b> Graduate Writing Seminar 1&amp;2</p> <p><b>Activities:</b> Thesis project development</p>
<b>3. Level of Application of knowledge</b>	Competence in the research process by applying an existing body of knowledge in the critical analysis of a new question or of a specific problem or issue in a new setting.	<b>LO4, LO8</b>	<p><b>Specific Course(s):</b> Thesis Project Development</p> <p><b>Activities:</b> Development of research methodologies; Thesis proposal</p>
<b>4. Professional Capacity /Autonomy</b>	<p>The qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:</p> <p>The exercise of initiative and of personal responsibility and accountability; and</p> <p>Decision-making in complex situations; and</p>	<b>LO5, LO6, LO7, LO8</b>	<p><b>Specific Course(s):</b> Thesis Project Completion</p> <p><b>Activities:</b> Presentations</p>
	The intellectual independence required for continuing professional development;	<b>LO3, LO8, LO9</b>	<p><b>Specific Course(s):</b> Research Methods; Thesis Development and Completion</p> <p><b>Activities:</b> Independent study; Critical analysis of methodologies and creative approaches</p>

<b>GDLEs</b>	<b>Master of Fine Arts Degree</b> <i>This degree is awarded to students who have demonstrated:</i>	<b>MFA in Scriptwriting &amp; Story Design:</b> Program Learning Outcomes addressing each GDLE	Evidence confirming the expectation has been achieved:
	The ethical behaviour consistent with academic integrity and the use of appropriate guidelines and procedures for responsible conduct of research; and	<b>LO4, LO6</b>	<p><b>Specific Course(s):</b> Graduate Writing Seminar; Research Methods; Thesis Development and Completion</p> <p><b>Activities:</b> Research methods papers, critical analysis of methodologies</p>
	The ability to appreciate the broader implications of applying knowledge to particular contexts.	<b>LO5, LO7, LO9</b>	<p><b>Specific Course(s):</b> Contemporary Practices in Dramatic Writing; Business of Dramatic Writing</p> <p><b>Activities:</b> Analysis of best professional practices; Papers and presentations</p>
<b>5. Communication skills</b>	The ability to communicate ideas, issues and conclusions clearly.	<b>LO1, LO2</b>	<p><b>Specific Course(s):</b> Writing for Visual Media; Graduate Writing Seminar</p> <p><b>Activities:</b> Projects, thesis project development</p>
<b>6. Awareness of limits of knowledge</b>	Cognizance of the complexity of knowledge and of the potential contributions of other interpretations, methods, and disciplines.	<b>LO3, LO6, LO7, LO9</b>	<p><b>Specific Course(s):</b> Contemporary Practices in Dramatic Writing; Thesis Project Completion</p> <p><b>Activities:</b> Completion of Thesis</p>

## 1.4 Societal Need

As indicated by the program's learning outcomes, we firmly believe that the MFA in Scriptwriting & Story Design will serve an important societal need in the Canadian creative community and well beyond. As the global demand for storytelling across venues has never been greater, so too is the need for a program that will foster and strengthen creative voices from our rich and diverse society. In addition, the MFA has the potential to be an extraordinarily high-impact/high-visibility Master's program for Ryerson — unique in Canada and rare internationally — that will further cement the university's reputation as a preeminent center of practical creative arts education.

### 1.4.1 Labour Market

Toronto is one of the world's leading media industry centres, as well as the most active theatre city in the country. In consulting professionals in all of these fields, we discovered a passionate interest for developing writers, especially those who would expand the skill and range of Canadian content. Even games are evolving towards more complex storylines and depth of character. Aunim Hossain, the head of Tista Games, has claimed that the future of games will be assured when "games will have a depth of storytelling surpassing television and movies."<sup>4</sup> We anticipate forming partnerships with a number of production companies and theatres to provide both internships and bridges to the marketplace.

For writers today, the job is to tell the best possible stories in the best possible medium. The MFA program in Scriptwriting & Story Design will explore the foundations of dramatic structure and storytelling and encourage students to develop new creative forms. The program will begin by establishing common pillars of writing: the ability to structure a story, build dramatic tension, and craft powerful and moving characters. Writing is the foundation for dramatic storytelling in all media, but it has often been the weakest link in the chain of production because these non-visual structural elements are often difficult to learn. We believe this new MFA program has the potential to make a powerful and profound mark on the Canadian and international creative industries.

#### 1.4.2 Student Demand

In a Council of Ontario Universities (COU) report titled Advancing Ontario's Future Through Advanced Degrees (2012), a task force established that the projected demand for graduate student [positions] in the province will double to more than 64,000 full-time equivalent students by the next decade. The report maintains that the productivity gap between Canada and the United States — an estimated 15% — is partly a function of lower access to graduate programs.

All of the Canadian comparator programs we examined have limited spaces for large numbers of applicants, indicating a high level of demand and none have programs that explore dramatic writing across the disciplines of film, theatre, television, and emerging media. These features assure the demand for and uniqueness of the program.

Information from recent graduates pursuing MFA degrees in the visual arts supports the observation that Canadian universities cannot meet demand for places at the present time: as a result, many qualified Ryerson students have undertaken the considerable expense of study in the United States (Syracuse University, UCLA, RIT, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and Savannah College of Art & Design, among others) the United Kingdom (Goldsmiths College, London) and France (Le Fresnoy).

Recent inquiries to several MFA programs in Canada and Ontario produced the following data on admissions and intake:

University of Calgary	35 applicants	7 accepted
Nova Scotia College of Art & Design	177 applicants	8 accepted
University of Guelph	104 applicants	6 accepted
University of Waterloo	20-30 applicants	4 accepted + 2 part-time
University of Western Ontario	49 applicants	6 accepted
York University (Studio MFA Programs)	127 applicants	9 accepted
York University (Film Studies MFA)	120 applicants	15-18 accepted

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S5yPSkIG9pI>

**Totals from available data**

**632-642 applicants 55-58 accepted**

It is evident from the information above that student demand for this program would be quite strong.

### **Anticipated Enrolment**

The anticipated enrollment for the MFA in Scriptwriting & Story Design will be 11 – 14 Full-time equivalents (FTEs)

incoming students per year, with an estimated 22 – 28 MFA students at the steady state.

A highly functional, high-calibre program only works if there is a commitment to keep class size small. Such programs rely on intense mentorship between faculty and students. In a writing-intensive program optimal class size would be no larger than 12. While societal need indicators and applications data quoted above might suggest that the program would be viable with a larger intake, the ideal for intensive, small mentorship-style classes indicates projected enrolments should remain within a modest range, as follows:

#### **Start-up:**

Year 1 - 11-14 Full-time equivalents (FTEs)

Year 2 - Intake: 11-14 FTEs & 11-14 FTEs in second year

#### **Steady state:**

22-28 FTEs (over 2-year degree)

11-14 FTEs (in each year) \*

*\* Normal attrition predictions could suggest a slightly lower figure for the second year of the program, yet, it is anticipated that high demand for positions would still maintain the steady-state enrolment at 11-14 per year.*

### **1.4.3 Comparator Programs**

Findings indicate that there are **no programs in Canada** that offer an MFA in Scriptwriting & Story Design across the disciplines of film, theatre and television. For example, UBC offers only an option for either playwriting or screenwriting – but not both. Ryerson would be leading the way in Canada with this interdisciplinary program.

In North America, the program at the Tisch School of the Arts at NYU and the program at Northwestern are probably the most eminent models in combining writing for both Theater and Film. The program at Syracuse offers a degree that combines Television, Radio and Film. Otherwise there are some recently developed programs – in New Mexico, at Cal State, LA, Carnegie-Mellon, USC, and at the Michener Center in Texas that suggest the trend is toward greater intermedial writing programs. The comparative information assembled here provides useful specifics relative to the options the School was considering as the proposal took shape (Tables 2 and 3 below).

Comparators were used for research about course descriptions, common features of programs and specializations, language of admissions requirements, senior project criteria, and general features associated with MFA programs in writing for film, stage and television. Information from these sources has been used throughout the proposal, particularly with reference to program structure, sequence of courses, and balance of critical and theoretical elements with production course requirements.

Examples of programs that were studied in detail for information, including indicators of program emphasis can be found on the following web sites:

- Northwestern University: <https://write.northwestern.edu/>
- New York University: <https://tisch.nyu.edu/dramatic-writing>
- UBC:
  - <https://www.grad.ubc.ca/prospective-students/graduate-degree-programs/master-of-fine-arts-film-production-creative-writing>
  - <https://www.grad.ubc.ca/prospective-students/graduate-degree-programs/master-of-fine-arts-creative-writing-theatre>
- Michener Center: <https://michener.utexas.edu/>
- York University: <https://futurestudents.yorku.ca/graduate/programs/film>

In North America as a whole, only Northwestern, New York University and the Michener Center at the University of Texas have respected unified programs in writing for stage and screen, and they each take only a handful of students (see below). In Canada, there is currently no such unified program and as such we would expect strong student interest both nationally and internationally.

Canadian universities award master's degrees at less than half the rate of U.S. universities. More than a decade ago, the COU recommended that Ontario universities double enrolments in graduate programs (Nov. 2003). In the specific case of MFA programs in the visual arts and in dramatic writing, the situation was even more pronounced and neither existing nor new programs have kept pace with demand. A search of MFA programs in Canada by province yields the following information:

Comparison to Other Graduate Programs: Canada

Table 2: Comparison Programs: Canada

University	Program	Required Courses	Thesis Project	Years	Comments
Simon Fraser University	MFA in Interdisciplinary Arts	Minimum 35 units, including 25 of course work, and a project which is the equivalent of 10 units. CA 811 – Interdisciplinary Graduate Seminar I (5) (Contemporary issues in the fine and performing arts) CA 812 – Interdisciplinary Graduate Seminar II (5) CA 813 – Interdisciplinary Graduate Studio (5) (A studio course with emphasis on interdisciplinary artistic projects.) CA 883 – Studio in Fine and Performing Arts I (5) CA 898 – Master of Arts Graduating Project (10) And One of: CA 885 – Studio in Fine and Performing Arts II (5) CA 887 – Selected Topics in Fine and Performing Arts (5) CA 889 – Directed Study in Fine and Performing Arts (5)	Art Presentation	2	Students can focus on film production. There is no mention of drama or writing as a focus.
The University of British Columbia	MFA in Creative Writing and Theatre	THTR 500 -- Research Methods and Bibliography (3) THTR 562 -- Studies in Dramatic Theory and Criticism (3) FIPR 533 -- Advanced Problems in Directing (6) CRWR --Advanced Writing for Television (6) CRWR 514 Advanced Writing for Screen (6)	THTR 549 A and B (MA Thesis—Independent research project)	2	A joint program with Theatre and Creative Writing
	MFA in Film Production and Creative Writing		Professionally finished 20-minute film.		The MFA is primarily a film production degree with an additional focus on screenwriting.

University	Program	Required Courses	Thesis Project	Years	Comments
University of Alberta	MFA in Drama	n/a	n/a	2	There is no writing option.
University of Calgary	MFA in Drama	n/a	n/a	2	There's only a specialization in Playwriting.
University of Regina	Interdisciplinary MA and a practice-based MFA in Fine Arts	n/a	n/a	2	In the areas of media production and studies, music, theatre and visual arts. There is no mention or focus on writing
University of Western Ontario	MA in Film Studies	n/a	n/a	2	No mention or focus on writing. It is a studies degree with no emphasis on practice.
University of Guelph	MFA in Creative writing	n/a	n/a	2	Included in three semester long workshops that address the following genres: fiction, poetry, drama, and creative non-fiction. The MFA culminates in a thesis project with a full-length play or screenplay as an option, but the program's primary focus is on poetry and prose
University of Ottawa	MA in Theatre and an MFA in directing for theatre	n/a	n/a	2	No mention of writing
University of Windsor	MFA in Film and Media Arts	VSAR-8650 Studio Production: Through discussion, exercises and hands-on work, students explore the concepts, technologies, theories and production techniques of film and video creation and cinematic storytelling.	VSAR-8970 Thesis: The thesis consists of an exhibition of a body of original creative works within the MFA candidate's area of	2	There is no focus on writing

University	Program	Required Courses	Thesis Project	Years	Comments
			studio research. The thesis is planned and executed in conjunction with the candidate's advisory committee. This final exhibition is regarded as the equivalent of the scholarly thesis of an academic discipline and is examined by an oral defense conducted through a committee of internal and external examiners. The MFA candidate will also prepare a substantial research paper that acts as a support document for the thesis exhibition.		
York University	MFA in Film	n/a	A screenplay	2	There are courses in screenwriting and writing for television.
	MFA in Performance/Creation	n/a	Presenting a creative performance		There does not seem to be any focus on writing in Performance/Creation
Concordia University	MFA in Cinematic Arts	n/a	n/a	2	There is no focus on writing or drama. Concordia also offers a general MA in Film Studies
Université du Québec à Montréal	MA in Visual and Media Arts	AVM8101—Creative Seminar: Reports from Practice to Theory	Public presentation of created work	2	A graduate degree in digital media and video, but no emphasis on drama or

University	Program	Required Courses	Thesis Project	Years	Comments
	Theatre	AVM8111 – Creative Workshop I  EST8000 -- Methodology of Research and Experimental Creation  EST8100 – Reading Seminar  EST840X – Thematic Seminar I  EST850X – Workshop-creation I	One option is to write a fictional text for the stage		writing  Dramatic Writing is an option
Nova Scotia College of Art & Design	MFA in Media Arts	n/a	n/a	2	Allows students to focus on fine arts or media arts but no focus on dramatic writing (or any writing)

## Comparison to Other Graduate Programs: International

*Table 3: Comparison Programs: International*

University	Program	Required Courses	Thesis Project	Years	Comments
Northwestern	MFA in Writing for Screen and Stage	18 Units. MFA students will be allowed to take a maximum of 20 credits.  6 Core Courses; 4 Topics Courses; 2 Electives; 4 Theory/ History/Culture Courses; Internship.	Feature Thesis (writing project)	2 years	Firsthand look at the "real world" by participating in an internship at a film, stage, or TV production company in Chicago, LA, or New York or by participating in an independent study (in the event you cannot be placed in an internship).
Tish School of the Arts NYU	Goldberg Dept of Dramatic Writing MFA	70 Units. A minimum of 60 points in writing and text analysis. A minimum of 10 points in production and performance.	Full-length piece of work through at least two revisions of the first draft for stage or screen.	2 years	Acceptance into the Department enrolls all students in the Division of Playwriting and the Division of Film and TV Writing. Students study in both divisions, concentrating in at least one medium as their studies advance.
Michener Center	MFA in Writing	54 semester-hour degree, typically for three classes each in the fall and spring semesters. There are no summer classes.	Thesis will chiefly be a project in your primary field of writing but will also include representative work in your secondary field.	3 years	Those who hold an MFA or PhD degree in creative writing, in any genre from any institution, or an MA in creative writing from UT Austin are not eligible for our MFA program.

University	Program	Required Courses	Thesis Project	Years	Comments
University of New Mexico	MFA in Dramatic Writing	60 hours/60 credits	Full-length work (play or screenplay) written in the final year of the Candidate's program. Must be accompanied by a substantial essay (typically, 30-50 pages). 3 full-length plays, 1 screen play, 1 short screen or stage piece.	3 years	There are additional requirements for Applicants who are not U.S. Citizens or Permanent. After successfully completing 30 hours (i.e. at the end of the second year) of graduate work, all MFA students must pass a Comprehensive Examination.
CAL State University, Los Angeles	MFA in Theatres Arts	60 units total including:  4 Writing Core courses; Dramatic Writing (12 units); History, Theory, Criticism, Production and Writing (9 units)	Thesis may be an original play, screenplay, choreography, storyboard, or other form of "play", or may be an original work for a print medium -- such as a novel or graphic novel or poetry.	3 years (2 years under special circumstance)	The MFA in Theatre Arts, Option in Dramatic Writing, is offered by the Department of Theatre Arts with primary support from the Department of Film and Electronic Arts, and additional support from the Department of Comparative Literature and Classics, and the Department of Communication Studies

## 1.5 Admission Requirements

The Master of Fine Arts program in Scriptwriting & Story Design will follow the admission requirements of other MFA programs. They are:

- Demonstrated capacity to undertake advanced research and practice through completion of a Bachelor of Arts (BA) or Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) in a related discipline;
- Prospective students must have an overall GPA of 3.0/4.33 (B or equivalent) in the last two years of study within a four-year undergraduate (or equivalent) bachelor's degree.

### English Language Requirements

Applicants who did not complete their Bachelor's or Master's degree in the English Language will be required to submit an English Language Proficiency Test Score. The minimum required scores are as per the general requirement for all other graduate programs at Ryerson:<sup>5</sup>

*Table 4: English Language Requirements*

TOEFL (BIT)	IELTS --- Academic	MELAB	CAEL	PTE
93	7.0	85	70	63

For exemption from this requirement, applicants are required to provide an official statement from their institution confirming that English is the language of instruction and examination for the duration of study. Other exceptions may also be considered, as approved by the FCAD Associate Dean, Graduate Education and the Vice-Provost and Dean of Yeates School of Graduate Studies.

### Program Specific Documents Required for Admissions

#### Statement of Interest

- A statement of 500 - 1000 words should address the following:
- Applicant's reasons for pursuing graduate studies in Scriptwriting & Story Design.
- A description of the major writing project the student wishes to pursue.
- How their previous studies and experience have prepared them for this program.
- Their career objectives and how this degree program relates to them.

#### Curriculum Vitae

This will include all applicable work experience and publications.

#### Letters of Recommendation (2)

All letters of recommendation must come directly from the referee. At least one recommendation letter must be from a professor familiar with the student's work. Student submitted copies will not be accepted.

#### Transcripts

Transcripts are required from every degree granting institution the student has attended.

#### Examples of Work

The interdisciplinary admissions committee requires documentation of creative written work as follows:

1. one (1) script in theatre, film or video/television or equivalent digital media format (web series, etc.),

OR

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.ryerson.ca/graduate/admissions/requirements/>

2. 2 samples of story outlines or treatments (or one of each for a total of 2),  
OR
3. 1 sample of a story outline or treatment plus a critical exploration of a character or narrative style

The examples of work submitted should be related to the intended thesis project identified in the statement of interest.”

The admission requirements outlined above adequately prepare incoming students to achieve the learning outcomes for the MFA degree upon graduation.

### [Calendar Admission Requirements](#)

The following text is taken from: <https://www.ryerson.ca/graduate/future-students/apply/requirements/>

*“The minimum grade requirement for admission consideration to a master’s program is a 3.0/4.33 (B or equivalent) in the last two years of study within a four--year undergraduate (or equivalent) bachelor’s degree.*

*For doctoral studies, you must have achieved a minimum of 3.33/4.33 (B+ or equivalent) in your master’s program.*

*The Yeates School of Graduate Studies is committed to maintaining high quality graduate and professional programs and to offering admission to those applicants that are best qualified and most likely to succeed in these programs. Due to the competitive nature of our programs, it is not possible to offer admission to everyone who applies that meets the minimum entrance requirements for the program. All applications will be considered on an individual basis and subject to competition.*

*Please review the specific program requirements that you are applying for carefully. If you have studied outside of Canada, we will use your institution’s grading scale to calculate your GPA.”*

#### [1.5.1 Program Learning Outcomes](#)

The admission requirements are appropriate for the learning outcomes as they ensure that potential students will have the academic, research and creative/experiential background needed to integrate and apply the knowledge and skills delivered in the program. The B average minimum offers evidence that candidates are competent academically.

The CV and transcripts will allow the admissions committee to assess applicants’ prior experience in the academic and/or professional field. The applicants’ Bachelor’s degree will demonstrate the basic knowledge associated with the ability to achieve the proposed learning outcomes.

The statement of interest and samples of work will allow the admissions committee to assess applicants’ ability to achieve learning outcomes 1, 5 and 9 as they relate to the ability to formulate complex and strategic forms of written and verbal expression.

Meeting with the potential supervisor prior to admission can further add to this assessment. A list of supervisors with bios and identified research interests will be made available to the all applicants via a program website.

Applicants who lack pertinent skills may be asked to take appropriate additional courses dependent on their academic background.

### 1.5.2 Alternative Requirements

There are no alternative requirements for this program.

## 1.6 Structure

### 1.6.1 Curriculum

The proposed MFA in Scriptwriting & Story Design is a two-year, interdisciplinary practice-based program of study that will lead to or enhance careers as screenwriters, media industry executives, teachers, commissioning editors, producers and PhD candidates.

The curricular structure listed reflects the intention to offer this two-year program of study, comprised of nine courses, plus thesis project development and completion. Students would spend their first year taking courses across various forms, writing a number of scripts and plays and dramatic pieces of various lengths, and then concentrating on one form for their thesis project. The project would consist of one full-length screenplay or stage play, television script, or other dramatic script-based media iteration.

To prepare students for these outcomes, a rigorous program of study has been developed based on the field of the core elements of dramatic writing. This program will contextualize the production of practice-led research creation projects. Each student will be expected to individually develop a thesis, constituting an original contribution to knowledge, which will be demonstrated through script-based dramatic projects.

The program of study combines required course work with controlled access to electives from interdisciplinary offerings drawn from shared graduate electives in existing FCAD Master's-level programs.

#### **Year One**

Our pedagogy is designed to encourage creating with technology rather than for technology. To that end, we will begin in the first year with the **Elements of Dramatic Storytelling** as the key foundational plank for all forms of dramatic writing. The course in **Writing for Visual Media** will be an encounter with the full range of emerging digital linear and nonlinear forms current in the early 21st century, including traditional and fractured narratives.

#### **Year Two**

In the second year of the program, each student will concentrate on individual writing projects in the medium of their choice. Extensive workshopping will be part of the process. We will draw on the combined resources of the three schools to create a "repertory" company (a group of graduate and upper-level undergraduate students who can act and direct for the projects, as well as videotape readings and performances). These ventures will provide opportunities for undergraduate students to participate in the work of the program and, where applicable, earn course credit (for example, through the RTA School of Media's creative community service hours incentive). There will be a graduate faculty advisor attached to each project. By the time of graduation, each student will have completed a full draft of a dramatic writing project.

#### **Thesis Supervision**

Each student will receive both a primary thesis supervisor and a secondary advisor. These faculty members, conversant in the field of dramatic writing that the student is engaged in, will help the student shape the final thesis project and guide them throughout to its completion.

## Oral Defense Committee

Committee membership is recommended to the GPD by the student's supervisory committee in consultation with the student.

The examining committee will normally be composed of: the supervisor(s); two faculty members from the student's program who are members of YSGS; and a non-voting Chair, appointed by the program director.

## Curriculum Structure

*Table 5: Curriculum Structure: Required Courses*

Year One					
Fall Term	Cr.	Winter term		Spring term	Cr.
Elements of Dramatic Storytelling	1	Writing for Visual Media	1	Thesis Project Development	0
Script Analysis	1	Acting and Directing for Writers	1		
Researching and Developing the Dramatic Project	1				
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>3</b>		<b>2</b>		<b>0</b>

Year Two					
Fall Term		Winter Term		Spring Term	
Graduate Writing Seminar – Thesis Project 1	1	Graduate Writing Seminar – Thesis Project 2	1	Thesis Project Completion	0
Contemporary Practices in Dramatic Writing	1	Business of Dramatic Writing	1		
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>2</b>		<b>2</b>		<b>0</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5</b>		<b>4</b>		<b>9</b>

This curriculum follows the general model of MFA programs in Canada, North America, and the Commonwealth (see Comparison to Other Programs) in its balance of writing/production requirements, historical, critical and research studies, and a defined field of emphasis.

The courses in the table above and listed below for first and second year of the program are new core offerings designed for the MFA in Scriptwriting & Story Design. We are confident that, between the three schools, we have the capacity to offer all new courses. We acknowledge the demands associated with course development, faculty workloads, and sabbaticals and feel that, as noted below in section b.vii, the strong

contingent of faculty associated with the program have the capacity to deliver these new courses at an advanced level. Development of these courses will be taken on by representatives from all three schools.

## Course Descriptions: Required Courses

### First Year

#### **Elements of Dramatic Storytelling**

This course will investigate the intrinsic nature of storytelling—a beginning, a middle and an end—and how it is animated and driven by emotional connection and specificity of description through character, theme and dramatic structure.

#### **Script Analysis**

Students will examine scripts from the standpoint of the text with the aim to explore how decisions are made from the writer's point of view. Students learn key elements of dramaturgical analysis and understand the nature of the choices and decisions that take a script from the page to the stage or screens.

#### **Research Methods for Dramatic Writing**

Using research methods optimized for dramatic writing includes those based in humanities, social sciences and creative disciplines. The course will familiarize students with a variety of research methods and information-gathering processes.

#### **Writing for Visual Media**

Students will explore commonalities and differences in the dramatic forms of a screenplay, teleplay, stage play and a full panoply of emerging digital media. Storytelling approaches include shifting POV, fractured narrative, episodic and layered content.

#### **Acting and Directing for Writers**

Hands-on participation in acting and directing exercises with scene study and use of acting techniques (Stanislavsky, etc.) are the means by which this course invites students to develop characters.

#### **Thesis Project Development (compulsory, non-credit)**

In the spring term of Year 1, students will work with their thesis supervisor to begin developing the Scriptwriting & Story Design thesis project. Students will explore dramatic context, research themes and develop characterization. By the end of this term, students will have chosen the subject of their final thesis project.

### Second Year

#### **Graduate Writing Seminar – Thesis Project 1**

In this seminar students develop their Scriptwriting & Story Design thesis project. This will involve feedback from the supervisor, course instructor and other students. By the end of this seminar, students will have a solid outline of their chosen subject and a second reader for their final thesis project.

#### **Graduate Writing Seminar – Thesis Project 2**

With the support of the thesis supervisor, and feedback from the course instructor and other students, the writer will present ongoing drafts of their thesis culminating in a feature-length screenplay, stage play or television script/pilot.

### **Contemporary Practice in Dramatic Writing**

Students will examine contemporary practices by viewing and analyzing current film, theatre, television and emerging media productions. Guest artists will contribute their unique expertise to helping students articulate the effects of differing creative choices on the dramatic piece.

### **Business of Dramatic Writing (Guest Speakers and field trips)**

Students will explore the challenges and opportunities of bringing their dramatic works to audiences from a business vantage point. Guest speakers, from industry and the creative community, will lend their expertise in areas such as creative development, financing, production, talent representation and presentation platforms. Thesis Project Completion (compulsory, non-credit)

**Students work with supervisors to complete their thesis projects.**

### **Existing Elective Courses (optional)**

Permission for 2-4 MFA in Scriptwriting & Story Design students in each graduate course has been granted by the FCAD Graduate Program Directors. Students may select a single course from the following list during their first and second years of the program.

#### **The Culture of the Avant-Garde: Modernity's Discontents**

This course explores the discontent that members of vanguard artistic movements of the 20th century harbored relative to the culture of modernity and examines the different forms that this discontent (or protest) assumed in Futurism, Dada, Surrealism, Lettrism and Situationism. The course examines both key documents in cultural theory and the manifestos issued by various groups and is concerned particularly with artists who attempted to forge a link between political revolution and a revolution in consciousness. The role the cinema played in all these artistic movements is given special consideration.

#### **Topics in Cross-Cultural Communication**

A vogue term that has emerged in recent years in cross-cultural competence. In fact, the term denotes a vast complex of competencies, which educators, politicians and business leaders around the world have identified as one of the most crucial of the 21st century. The purpose of this course will be to foster such “competence” through a wide-ranging examination of the major social issues that affect communication across national and cultural boundaries.

#### **Media Languages: Forms and Approaches**

This shared, interdisciplinary course will investigate both common elements (visual and auditory narratives, methods of presentation/distribution, cultural roles) and specific attributes (individual characteristics and technologies) of contemporary media forms. Key developments in the evolution of media types and media languages will be explored in the larger context of understanding critical and theoretical issues associated with these forms and languages.

#### **Audiences and the Public**

One might begin with the work of Jürgen Habermas and his influential notion that “the public” is not something that can be taken for granted, but a very specific historical development that first emerged in the 16th and 17th centuries in the bourgeois societies of western Europe. There is a rich body of literature that examines how the idea of “the public” or “the audience” has taken shape at different times; the “imagined communities” that are the foundations of modern nations could not have taken shape in the absence of mass media. This course will examine the development of these ideas in the context of the varying disciplines offered across the faculty.

### 1.6.2 GDLEs and Learning Outcomes

The program has three central component groups: courses, research and thesis project. As shown in Table 1 above and Table 6 below, the program is structured in a manner that the program learning outcomes meet the master's level GDLEs and the curriculum components work together to meet the program learning outcomes. Table 5 above presents the breakdown of these components in the curriculum.

Table 6: Proposed Curricular Structure with Teaching and Assessment Methods Mapped Against Program Learning Outcomes

CORE	Teaching	Assessment	LO1		LO2		LO3		LO4		LO5		LO6		LO7		LO8		LO9	
			F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P
Elements of Dramatic Storytelling	Lecture, assigned readings	Presentations, papers, discussion	F		F		F				F				F				F	
Script Analysis	Lecture, workshops	Presentations, case studies	F		F		F				F		F		F		F			
Research Methods for Dramatic Writing	Lecture, assigned readings	Papers, case studies	F				F				P	F		F		F		F		
Writing for Visual Media	Lecture, workshop	Presentations, papers, case studies			F		F				F						F			
Acting and Directing for Writers	Workshop, demonstrations	Presentations, in-class projects							F		F		F							
Thesis Project Development	Consultations	Written proposal, project milestones	F						F		F		F							
Graduate Writing Seminar – Thesis Project 1	Group work, feedback sessions, discussion	Seminars, small project demonstration	F				F		F		F								F	
Contemporary Practices in Dramatic Writing	Lectures, guest speakers	Papers, case studies			F		F				F		F		F		F			
Graduate Writing Seminar – Thesis Project 2	Group work, feedback sessions, discussion	Seminars, small project demonstration		P								P								P
Business of Dramatic Writing	Lectures, guest speakers	Papers, case studies									F		F				F			
Thesis Project Completion	Consultations	Written proposal, project milestones		P					P				P						P	
Core Totals			5	2	4	0	5	0	3	2	9	1	6	1	4	0	5	0	2	2
Supervision	Consultations	Documentation of progress					F													

Oral Defense		Oral presentation and oral defense		P			P		P									
Electives (OPTIONAL) <sup>6</sup>	Lecture, assigned readings	Papers, presentation, group work																
<b>Elective Totals</b>																		
<b>TOTAL</b>																		

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<sup>6</sup> As no electives are required, this section is deliberately left blank.

### 1.6.3 Program Length

The program of study is offered on a full-time basis. The program length is two years of full-time study.

### 1.7 Mode of Delivery

The MFA program is delivered through a combination of lectures, seminars, and experiential learning components. Heavily emphasized in the learning process is the detailed mentoring of the student's own writing and research.

The experiential learning component of the program has structured opportunities within courses that require collaboration and experimentation, as well as a more flexible approach that requires student initiative to find opportunities to complete their activities (e.g. collaborative activity, research centres, innovation hubs, learning zones and industry liaison opportunities).

Table 6 provides a summary of the program in which the relationship between the required courses, experiential learning activities, and thesis development with the LOs for the proposed program and the graduate degree GDLEs.

Depth and breadth of knowledge encompasses program LOs 3, 6 and 8 in which a thorough understanding of substantial knowledge related to theories, research methods, and data analysis is demonstrated through discussion and debate within the classroom. Group work activities and classroom discussions further nurture the evolution of this depth and breadth of knowledge throughout the required courses Script Analysis and Elements of Dramatic Storytelling. As well, course-based assignments that focus on review and critical analysis of methodology, theory and application further demonstrate this depth and breadth of knowledge.

Research and scholarship incorporate program LO's 1, 3, 4, 6 and 8 in which the ability to conduct and implement research for the generation of knowledge and to optimize research methodologies towards enriching the dramatic writing development process is demonstrated through in-class discussion, group activities, workshops and assignments.

Level of application of knowledge encompasses the program LOs 4 and 8 in that all students are expected to create, implement, and evaluate a script-based project at an advanced level. In doing so, they enhance their overall academic skills and practice related to the goal of applying bodies of knowledge in creative and self-expressive pursuits.

Professional capacity and autonomy embed program LOs 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9 in which intellectual independence and the performance of ethical behaviors consistent with academic integrity is most evident through written assignments and oral presentations. Specifically, students will be expected to engage in active leadership through the experiential learning activities and in courses through group activities, workshops and discussions.

Communication skills are represented in LOs 1 and 2 and evident through individual and group presentations; experiential learning activities; interactions with the supervisor, supervisory committee, and story teams.

Awareness of Limits of Knowledge is covered in program LOs 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9. This is presented as foundational content through the courses and is developed through the experiential learning activities. Proficiency in this area is achieved through the dissertation activities including the project.

## 1.8 Resources

### 1.8.1 Human, Physical, and Financial Resources

#### Number of Faculty and Support Staff

There are three full-time faculty members from the School of Image Arts (Michal Conford, Lia Langworthy and Alireza Khatami), two full-time Performance faculty members (Cynthia Ashperger and Natalie Alvarez), and two full-time faculty members in RTA (Michael Coutanche and James Nadler) who are able to teach the core courses in Screenwriting & Story Design. There are also numerous associated faculty members (listed below with CVs in Appendix VI) who are able to deliver specific course content for the program. Among all there are no faculty members who are over-committed to other graduate programs.

Once the MFA is underway, we would anticipate the need to hire one new faculty member primarily associated with the graduate program for one of the three schools contributing to the program. Three new tenure-track faculty members with a focus in writing for screen and stage have been hired in the last year to replace retirements. A fourth tenure-track faculty member position has been recently posted.

Coordination among the three FCAD Schools will be crucial for the MFA in Scriptwriting & Story Design's success. Additionally, with a two-year cohort, it is important to have dedicated support staff to oversee and administer the program. In regard to staffing, the program will require:

A Graduate Program Director (ideally a faculty member teaching in one of the three Schools)  
A Program Administrator (to coordinate among the three Schools)<sup>7</sup>

#### Specialized Space Required

While equipment is already available through the Film, Performance, and RTA programs and at the Rogers Communication Centre, these resources are already thinly stretched. For the goals of the proposed program to be fully realized, additional equipment and interfaces will be needed for students to visualize their projects as they develop. Studio space will be needed for some of the workshop-intensive courses. With the renovation of the RCC spaces, we see no problem for supporting this need, which has been confirmed by the FCAD Manager of Operations.<sup>8</sup>

The program will require two classrooms and a lounge that can be used for studying and project work, but also for teaching. For teaching, appropriate presentation technology is necessary. Ideally, the program would supply educational licenses for software such as Final Draft™ for screenwriting.

#### Preliminary Budget Information

The MFA in Scriptwriting & Story Design has the potential to play a very significant role in the reputation enhancement of Ryerson University both nationally and internationally and the resources required to achieve these goals are quite modest in scope. Because this is a writing program rather than a production program, it will have significantly lower costs than any of the other production-based MFA programs currently housed in

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<sup>7</sup> As of this writing, we are reorganizing our support staff for graduate programs. A MAC hire at the level of a Program Manager (upgrade for one graduate program administrator (GPA)) is being posted. The remaining GPAs will be managed by the MAC Program Manager.

<sup>8</sup> See attached letter of support from dean of FCAD.

FCAD.

*Table 7: Preliminary Budget Information*

Item	Budget
Number of courses	9 courses
Additional RFA faculty member	currently being posted
Graduate program staffing	see above restructuring
Writers in Residence	\$ CUPE course rate <\$12K
Advertising and recruitment	\$To be costed
Additional space	TBA in RCC
Additional equipment	\$10K non-salary general (Final Draft software 10@\$790.00)
Student activities (projects, travel)	\$ Ancillary fees

#### **RGF/RGS**

\$3400 per FTE master's student

Students are expected to apply for competitively adjudicated scholarships and awards such as the OGS, OGF and SSHRC awards. These awards are listed below:

Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS):	\$ 15,000
Ontario Graduate Fellowship (OGF):	\$ 9,000
Canada Graduate Scholarships – Master's Program	\$ 17,500

#### **Tuition**

Tuition for the MFA in Scriptwriting & Story Design program will be based on comparable MFA programs' annual domestic full-time fee of **\$9,220.12** per year. Students pay tuition fees per term, as per Ryerson University policy, which is equal to 1/3 of the annual amount.

#### **1.8.2 Faculty**

The following lists are proposed participating faculty for the MFA program. They include core teaching faculty from the Film program in Image Arts, the School of Performance, the RTA School of Media, as well as other tenured or tenure-track faculty. These listings are subject to adjustment.<sup>9</sup>

Tenured or tenure-track core faculty members whose graduate involvement will be exclusively in the graduate program under review.

- M. Conford, School of Image Arts
- M. Coutanche, RTA School of Media
- Khatami, School of Image Arts
- L. Langworthy, School of Image Arts

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<sup>9</sup> See Appendix for faculty bios.

Tenured or tenure-track core faculty members who are involved in teaching and/or supervision in other graduate program(s) in addition to being a member of the program under review.

- N. Alvarez, School of Performance
- L. Petrou, RTA School of Media
- C. Ashberger, School of Performance
- R. Lachman, RTA School of Media
- K. Al-Solaylee, School of Journalism
- Levine, School of Performance
- J. Nadler, RTA School of Media

Non-tenured or tenure-track core faculty members who are involved in teaching and/or supervision in other undergraduate program(s) in addition to being a core member of the program under review.

- T. Cates, School of Image Arts
- Till, School of Image Arts
- J. Warrack, School of Image Arts

### 1.8.3 Program Type

The MFA in Scriptwriting & Story Design is a practice-based program leading to a terminal degree.

## **2.0 PROGRAM CONTENT**

### **2.1 Current State of Discipline**

The proposed curriculum addresses the current state of the discipline through its core courses. This is to be confirmed during the program's upcoming site visit. The proposed MFA in Scriptwriting & Story Design will continue to address the current state of discipline-based and interdisciplinary practices through the project and dissertation components of the degree while being supported by all core and elective courses.

### **2.2 Professional Licensing/Accreditation**

There is no professional licensing or accreditation associated with this program.

### **2.3 Unique Features and Experiential Learning**

This proposal for a practice-based program in Scriptwriting & Story Design leading to the Master of Fine Arts Degree (MFA) is firmly grounded in the traditions of dramatic writing for the stage and screen yet fully adaptive to new and emergent media forms. The program is both pragmatic and experimental: it looks to the future of new narratives while embracing media convergences. In our inherently multidisciplinary, multi-media world, writers today are often called upon to develop dramatic content that migrates between stage play, screenplay, television script, interactive, and transmedia narrative. FCAD's MFA in Scriptwriting & Story Design is aimed at developing well-rounded, agile writers who can work in a multitude of forms.

To facilitate these goals, a distinguished contingent of faculty members with a wide expertise has expressed interest in teaching in the program (see below). Faculty in the School of Performance, Image Arts and the RTA Media are writers actively involved in the arts, entertainment and professional fields associated with dramatic writing. These subject experts have well-established connections and we intend to utilize these resources to enhance student experiences. We plan to draw on these connections in a number of ways including exploring the possibility for internships to augment other learning when the opportunity arises. Internships are not a requirement of the MFA, but we will encourage their development and will consider their potential on a case-by-case basis as the program evolves.

The proposed program could also be used to attract world-class writers-in-residence associated with the program. This could be of immense value to the university in further cementing its role as a key institution responsive to the expansion of creative industries in Canada and abroad.

### **2.4 Degree Completion**

All courses offered within program of study are at the graduate level.

In the two years of the program students will take the nine required courses of the program along with the intensive Thesis Development and Completion segments in the Spring of each year.

The Master's Thesis is dedicated to the research and production of the final thesis project. Documentation of the practice component of the thesis is required and will take a form that is appropriate to the work.

The thesis will be completed within two years of full-time study.

## **3.0 ASSESSMENT OF TEACHING AND LEARNING**

### **3.1 Learning Outcomes and GDLEs**

The Graduate Program in Scriptwriting & Story Design seeks to graduate writers who have a mastery of the legacy fundamentals and future possibilities of dramatic writing and who have a respect and concern for their art and the audiences who will experience it.

The program's overall aim is to foster an environment where students are well-rounded and possess an agility as writers who can create in multiple forms of dramatic presentation.

#### **Learning Outcomes:**

Upon completion of this program, graduates will be able to:

1. Create a dramatic piece of writing to a professional standard.
2. Translate storytelling skills between and across a variety of media (film, television, stage, online) by developing a written dramatic form for a medium in another dramatic form.
3. Describe, formulate and analyze key narrative structures, histories and stylistic concepts across a variety of dramaturgical and cultural contexts.
4. Demonstrate a variety of research competencies to help guide creative practices in dramatic writing.
5. Generate innovative methods to solve dramatic writing problems.
6. Acknowledge the complexity of ideas and experiences and potential contribution of other approaches by respectfully listening to and responding to the critical positions of others.
7. Embrace non-normative narratives and be willing to give voice to silenced or alternative story-telling modes.
8. Identify forms of dramatic writing and communities of practice across media.
9. Articulate dramatic writing as a means of self-expression and a tool to enlighten, inform and entertain.

The Graduate Degree Level Expectations (GDLEs) for this Master's program are listed in Table 1.

Table 1 above shows how the proposed program learning outcomes satisfy the graduate level GDLEs.

Table 6 above shows how students will be graded on course deliverables reflecting several program LO's and GDLE's in both written (assignments, quizzes, projects, exams, etc.) and oral (presentations, informal discussion, etc.) forms.

The proposed methods for the assessment of student achievement of the learning outcomes and the Graduate Degree Level Expectations vary with each course.

The courses will have a mix of individual and group assessments. The individual assessments are necessary as a type of quality control, to ensure students have the requisite knowledge at an individual level, developing professional capacity and autonomy. The group assessments encourage collaboration between students and offer an interdisciplinary approach to knowledge production.

Research and scholarly capabilities are developed through all the core courses, as well as the Master's project and thesis.

Students must complete all courses with a grade of B or higher, consistent with the existing Yeates School of Graduate Studies policies on grading, promotion and academic standing. Milestone experiential learning elements will be pass/fail and assessed by a student's supervisor and the GPD. The Master's Thesis (and any associated project components) will be a pass/fail milestone graded by the Thesis supervisory committee.

All Master's students will be required to submit academic progress reports each semester in accordance with Ryerson Policy 164. Under Policy 164 a minimum of 1 progress report to be commented upon and signed by the student's supervisor is required per year.

All academic standing, promotion and graduation requirements for this program will conform to the most recent policies approved by Senate. There are no variations planned for this program.

### 3.2 Student Performance and GDLEs

All course work will utilize the same framework of assessment of student performance. The framework is based on a common rubric (below) developed by mapping the GDLEs against the program's learning outcomes.

*Table 8: GDLEs and Elements as Common Assessment Rubric*

Graduate Degree Level Expectations (GDLEs)	Element Expectations
1. Depth and Breadth of Knowledge	Advanced principles are presented coherently and critically, using peer reviewed literature that addresses the complex problem.
2. Research and Scholarship	Use of relevant literature that supports generation of new knowledge and original research.
3. Level of Application of Knowledge	Competence in applying an existing body of tools, techniques and theories.
4. Professional Capacity/Autonomy	Application of organizational, professional and social ethics in academic and professional decision making.

5. Level of Communication Skills	Coherence, clarity, persuasiveness in written, oral and presentation formats.
6. Awareness of Limits of Knowledge	Articulation of limitations and implications of approach; Cognizance of alternative solutions and perspectives.

### 3.3 Variation from GPA policy

None.

## 4.0 ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### 4.1 Library Report

The current library resources are sufficient to support the proposed Master's in Scriptwriting & Story Design at this time. The Library Report is included in Appendix V.

### 4.2 Students

#### 4.2.1 Student Resources and Quality

Students in this Master's program will have a dedicated space (see letter of support, Dean, Charles Falzon, Appendix III).

The formal experiential learning activities will allow students to explore writing across platforms and beyond traditional venues. Supervisors will also support students in order to promote pathways to further their academic and/or professional direction. The potential for industry placements in film, television, theatre, web-based and installation work for students in the MFA in Scriptwriting & Story Design will expose them to a variety of opportunities that will support them in choosing their careers beyond the Master's degree.

It is anticipated that GA roles will be available in undergraduate core, professional and professionally related electives and that dedicated funded positions for students in the MFA program will be made available. These opportunities will aid in attracting applicants and further enhance the pedigree of the MFA. The number of positions available will depend on demand and resources, however, given the expertise of the students enrolled in the MFA, the undergraduate programs in Performance, Image Arts and RTA have already acknowledged the value in hiring these GAs specifically, but not exclusively, for their writing courses or courses with written assignments such as essays.

#### 4.2.2 Student Funding

As noted above, students will be eligible for RGS/RGF funding support. As noted in Table 9, research funding for FCAD faculty members has increased significantly over the past eight years. A large portion of this research funding is allocated for graduate assistantships as well as stipends for research assistants (RAs). These funds are from a combination of sources including support from faculty research stipends, FCAD, and YSGS.

As the program is Faculty-wide it is expected that there will be many opportunities for Graduate Assistantships. There are several undergraduate writing courses where GAs will provide support including:

- RTA 212 Media Writing
- RTA 941 Dramatic Writing
- RTA 703 Thesis: Media Writing Project I
- RTA 705 Thesis: Media Writing Project II
- FPN 503 Scriptwriting & Story DesignI
- FPN 603 Scriptwriting & Story DesignII
- THF 417 - Advanced Playwriting
- THF 402 - Text Examination: Dramaturgy and Direction

Students are expected to apply for competitively adjudicated scholarships and awards such as the OGS/RGS, OGF and CGS M awards. These awards are listed below:

Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS)/Ryerson Graduate Scholarship (RGS):	\$ 15,000
Ontario Graduate Fellowship (OGF):	\$ 12,000
Canada Graduate Scholarships – Master's	\$ 17,500

### 4.3 Faculty

#### 4.3.1 Faculty SRC and Quality Indicators

Ten highly qualified faculty members form the core that will deliver and support the program. Additional supervisory/advisory support drawn from across the FCAD faculty will add to the intellectual and practice-based expertise available to students. In addition, guest speakers and mentors from the creative industries, cultural institutions, as well as independent artists will be invited into the program to provide additional mentorship opportunities to sustain the program and enhance the student experience.

RFA faculty contribute significantly to FCAD graduate teaching, supervision and research. All faculty members involved in the proposed program are experts in their field. The Faculty of Communication and Design covers television, radio, online media, journalism, film, photography, cultural studies, and theatre among other subject areas. No single program can offer the range of teaching and subject area expertise in within the field of Scriptwriting & Story Design. Our combined strength is unmatched in North America. In addition, the group has redundancy in order to cover sabbatical terms and administrative secondment (i.e. course release associated with administrative positions).

The Curriculum Vitae of program faculty are listed in Appendix IV.

#### Core Faculty with Master's Supervision Capability

##### Kamal Al-Solaylee, School of Journalism

Kamal Al-Solaylee, a professor of journalism at Ryerson University, is the author of the national bestselling memoir *Intolerable: A Memoir of Extremes* which won the 2013 Toronto Book Award and was a finalist for the CBC's Canada Reads, the Hilary Weston Writers' Trust Prize for Nonfiction and the Edna Staebler Award for Creative Nonfiction. His latest book, *Brown: What Being Brown in the World Today Means (to Everyone)*, was hailed as "brilliant" by *The Walrus* magazine and "essential reading" by the *Globe and Mail*. It was a finalist for the Governor General's Literary Awards for Nonfiction, the Trillium Book Award and won the Shaughnessy Cohen Prize for Political Writing. He was previously a theatre critic at *the Globe and Mail* and has written reviews and features on arts and politics for all major Canadian publications, including *Toronto Star*, *National*

*Post*, *The Walrus*, *Toronto Life*, *Quill & Quire* and *Literary Review of Canada*. In 2019, he won Gold at the National Magazine Awards for best column and was a finalist for the Allan Slaight Prize for Journalism. He's the co-creator (with David Weaver) of the procedural *Injustice*, currently in development at the CBC, and the creator of the family TV drama *Father Figures*, which has been optioned by eOne Entertainment for development. He's currently working on his third book of creative nonfiction, titled *Return*.

### **R. Natalie Alvarez, School of Performance**

Natalie Alvarez is Professor of Theatre and Performance Studies and teaches courses in performance history and theory. Her research focuses on immersive performance in the public sphere, performance and scenario-based pedagogy, contemporary political performance, Latina/o-Canadian theatre and performance, performance activism, and performance theory. She is the author of *Immersions in Cultural Difference: Tourism, War, Performance* (University of Michigan Press, 2018), winner of the 2019 Ann Saddlemeyer Book Prize awarded by the Canadian Association for Theatre Research (CATR). Natalie is the Principal Investigator of a four-year SSHRC Insight Grant, "Scenario Training to Improve Interactions Between Police and Individuals in Mental Health Crisis: Impacts and Efficacy", which uses performance as a nexus for multidisciplinary research across the humanities and social sciences. Natalie's prior experience as a screenwriter and story editor for film and television, theatre director, actor, and dramaturg informs her teaching, which fosters a movement between theory and creative practice.

### **Cynthia Ashperger, School of Performance**

Cynthia has been teaching at Ryerson since 1995 and was recently appointed Head of International and Special Projects for School of Performance. A master teacher of Chekhov Technique, she has lectured and directed nationally and internationally in Australia, Croatia, England, Finland, Germany, Holland, Japan, Korea and Serbia. Cynthia holds a PhD from University of Toronto's Drama Center. She has over thirty-five years of professional experience as an actor, director, producer and playwright. In 2013 she was nominated for a Dora award, Outstanding Performance for her role in *Feral Child*, and in 2016 for Canadian Screen Award, Best Performance by an actor in a supporting role. Her musical *Foreign Tongue*, supported by FCAD, premiered to critical acclaim in 2019 at The Next Stage Festival. The work has been published by Playwrights Canada Press in Theatre: *an (Im)migration*. *Foreign Tongue* is also being optioned for film development. Cynthia works as a director, actor, producer and writer. Most recently she acted in leading roles in *Foreign Tongue*, *Who Killed Snow White* by Judith Thompson 4th Line Theatre (development with Nightwood Theatre's Groundswell) and *Nashville Stories* (Summerworks). She is a well-known teacher of Chekhov acting technique and is researching methods in overcoming creative blocks as well as developing new methods within the rehearsal process.

### **Tara Cates, School of Image Arts**

Tara Cates has built a career as a writer, story editor, director, creative producer working in prime-time series, daytime strip serial, documentary, sketch comedy, short and feature length drama, animation and award show variety. She has been involved on over 1000 union, non-union, co-op and student film, video, television, theatre and literary projects. As creative consultant and story editor, Tara owns and operates Zydeco Creative Consulting and HERetic Films & Productions and is on the Harold Greenberg Foundation's list of recommended story editors. Tara is a former screenwriting mentor for the Toronto International Film Festival, alumna of the Canadian Film Centre (CFTP Award recipient), CTV Producer Fellow and MFA graduate (York University- screenwriting). She was a media literacy consultant and field producer with the Women's Television Network Foundation and has been a jury member and panelist for the National Student Short Film Festival. Tara has also served as a speaker on Women in the Media for professional women's organizations and was involved in the creation of arts collectives in both Toronto and Winnipeg, among them: The Gas Station Performing & Visual Arts School, Women in Film and Television's The Studio, WTN Foundation TV Camp for Girls and The Association of Canadian Librettists, Composers and Lyricists. In addition to her media work, Tara is an abstract artist who works in mixed media.

### [Michal Conford, School of Image Arts](#)

Michal Conford has worked as a writer and filmmaker in the Middle East, Europe and North America. Among his works are the documentary films *River People* and *Not on Any Map*, the screenplays for *Ice Planet* and *Yasmine*, and the libretto for *Nyx*, an opera which premiered at the Munich Biennale. He's a recipient of the IDA's David Wolper Prize, as well as the Golden Gate Award from the San Francisco International Film Festival, among others. Michal has also worked as a reporter and editor for the San Jose Mercury, CNN-Middle East and New York Times Television and has had short fiction published in *The Dalhousie Review*. He is the recipient of grants from the MacArthur and Ford Foundations and has recently completed his first project in VR, *Fragments of Jerusalem*. He is currently the Program Director for Film at the School of Image Arts.

### [Michael Coutanche, RTA School of Media](#)

Michael Coutanche's area of teaching and research expertise is in writing for Television, Film, Radio and emerging digital platforms. His former students have written and produced for shows such as *The Office*, *Community*, *Degrassi*, *Orange is the New Black*, *Orphan Black* and *Lost Girl*. He is the lead author of *The Report on Canadian Screenwriters*, a project that communicates the results of a study of the Writers' Guild of Canada membership and reveals the socio-economic conditions of the screenwriting occupation in Canada. Michael was a Fellow at Massey College and is a member of the Toronto Screenwriting Conference advisory board. He is also a story editor and frequent advisor to media companies and funding organizations. Prior to joining Ryerson, Michael developed film and television projects at the CBC including *Cowboys and Indians: The J.J. Harper Story*, *Flower & Garnet*, and *Hemingway vs. Callaghan*. Michael began his career at Alliance Communications Corporation.

### [Alireza Khatami, School of Image Arts](#)

Alireza Khatami is an award-winning writer and director whose trademark is folding fantasy elements into otherwise realistic narratives. His works address the questions of memory and trauma, crossing various disciplinary boundaries. Alireza's writing, video art and movies have been showcased and award in many festivals including Cannes, Berlinale, Vernice, Locarno and Rotterdam. Prior to joining Ryerson, Alireza taught for 6 years at the Lebanese American University in Lebanon and DePaul University in the US. His first feature film, *Oblivion Verses* premiered at the 74th Venice International Film Festival where it picked three awards including the Orizzonti Award for Best Screenplay and the FIPRESCI Award for Best Debut Film.

### [Dr. Richard Lachman, RTA School of Media](#)

Dr. Richard Lachman directs Zone Learning for Ryerson University, the Creative Technology Network, and the Experiential Media Institute. He is an Associate Professor, Digital Media in the RTA School of Media, and also serves as a Technology and Creative Consultant for entertainment and software-development projects. A Gemini award-winning producer, Richard has worked on many highly successful Canadian and US interactive and convergent-media projects over his career. Richard completed his doctorate at UNE in Australia studying software recommendation-engines, he did undergraduate work in Computer Science at MIT, and holds a master's degree from the MIT Media Lab's "Interactive Cinema" group. He was part of a startup acquired by Mattel, ending as Lead Designer and Lead Engineer for the Petz software with over 3 million units shipped worldwide. The software has received awards from ID Magazine and Communications Arts, was featured in the New York Times, USA Today and Time Magazine, and was part of an exhibition at the American Museum of the Moving Image in New York. His later work in transmedia has garnered a Gemini, CNMA and Webby Honouree awards, and he has lead collaborative design exercises with UNICEF, TIFF, Penguin UK, Kobo, the CRTC, and others. His areas of research include transmedia storytelling, digital documentaries, augmented/locative/VR experiences, mixed realities, and collaborative design thinking.

### [Lia Langworthy, School of Image Arts](#)

Lia Langworthy is a published essayist, screenwriter, filmmaker and educator. She has published essays in Mutha Magazine, Angel's Flight Literary West and Writers Resist. She has written for CBS (*Young and the*

*Restless*), Showtime (*Soul Food*), FX (*The Shield*), TvOne (*Media*) and ABC (*General Hospital*). She has appeared in Rogue Theatre's writers-who-read series, Rant & Rave, sharing her original narrative non-fiction. She appeared in *Survivors*, a Stand Up 2 Cancer short film shot by Errol Morris. In 2018, Lia was a semi-finalist for Universal's Writing Program and a semi-finalist for Imagine Impact. Lia attended UC Berkeley (BS) and UC Riverside (MFA). Lia currently has several film and TV projects in development and plans to direct her first feature summer 2020.

### Ira Levine, School of Performance

A theatre scholar with a background in theatre directing and performing arts management, Ira Levine has been a Ryerson professor for the past 32 years, chairing both the Theatre School (now School of Performance) and School of Professional Communication. From 1995 to 2005 he was Dean of the Faculty of Communication & Design, in which capacity he co-developed the university's first master's and Ph.D. program (in Communication and Culture), guided the development of professional master's programs in Journalism, Media Production, Documentary Media and Professional Communication, introduced BFA programs in Theatre and Dance, and established the Faculty's international exchange office and partnerships. In recent years he conceived, developed and served as founding Chair of Ryerson's School of Creative Industries, which launched in 2013. Dr. Levine is past Chair of the Canadian Association of Fine Arts Deans, a founding executive board member of the Canadian Media Research Consortium, and a past member of the boards of directors of Civic Theatres Toronto, the Sony Centre, the St. Lawrence Centre, and the Toronto Centre for the Arts. His publications include studies of American and Canadian theatre and cultural entrepreneurship education.

### James Nadler, RTA School of Media

James Nadler is the Chair of Ryerson University's School of Creative Industries and the Program Director of the Masters of Arts in Media Production. Nadler joined RTA School of Media's faculty in 2004. He has taught graduate students screenwriting for comedy, dramatic and factual television and has supervised their webseries, comedy, drama and feature film scripts. Nadler also runs the popular RTA in LA program on the campus of UCLA. He is a recipient of both the Dean's Teaching and Service awards at Ryerson. A recovering lawyer, James remains active in the commercial television industry. For Alliance Atlantis, James was the Executive Producer / Showrunner of the first three seasons of *Psi Factor: Chronicles of the Paranormal* starring Dan Aykroyd, Matt Frewer and Michael Moriarty. James also was the co-showrunner of *The Zack Files* and *Seriously Weird*. Other shows James wrote or produced include the documentary series *Women on Top* and the reality series *Office Temps* and *Crash Addicts*. He also developed the long running hit *Heartland* for the CBC. James was the Executive Producer / Showrunner of the comedy *Family Biz* (YTV, France 2) and the animated pilot *Bob! The Slob* (Teletoon). Finally, for Guru Studios, James developed and helped sell *True and the Rainbow Kingdom* to Netflix which is currently in production of its fourth season.

### Dr. Laurie Petrou, RTA School of Media

Laurie Petrou is an associate professor in the RTA School of Media who teaches in areas of storytelling, digital media, and media aesthetics, in mass lectures and small classes, to a range of students from first year to graduate students. She is a recipient of the Dean's Teaching Award and has twice been named a 'Prof Who Makes a Mark' by Ryerson University. Petrou has a background in fine art, digital media, and creative fiction. She wrote her first book of short fiction as part of her PhD in Communication and Culture at Ryerson and York universities. Bending genre and form, writing short stories, literary fiction, suspense, and young adult fiction, her first two books were listed among The Globe and Mail's Best Books of the Year and were named on a number of other book of the year lists. Her first novel and second book, *Sister of Mine*, won the inaugural Half the World Global Literati Award, beating out contestants in 65 countries, and has been published internationally. She is set to release her third book, *Love, Heather*, a young adult/adult crossover novel that confronts issues involving consent, violence and bullying in the social media age. It has been named on 'Amazon Editor's Favourite Young Adult Books for Fall', and 'Most Anticipated Fall Fiction' from

49th Shelf. Her works explore friendship, family, gender and the friction of relationships.

#### [Adam Till, School of Image Arts](#)

Adam Till is a writer/producer based in Toronto. He created, co-executive produced, and wrote the bulk of the episodes for the series *Billable Hours*, which ran on Showcase/Global from 2005-2009, winning the Gemini Award for Best Writing in a Comedy series in its final season. Till has written films starring Rob Lowe, Mira Sorvino and Abigail Breslin, and won the Canadian Comedy Award for Film Writing in 2006 for his film *Leo*. He is currently in development with 20th Century Fox/Fox TV on a new sitcom entitled *Meds*, being produced by Andrew Barnsley/Project 10 (*Schitt's Creek, Spun Out*).

#### [James Warrack, School of Image Arts](#)

James Warrack is a faculty member in the Film program of the School of Image Arts, and academic coordinator for the Film Studies program and the Summer Film School in the Chang School, Ryerson University. Warrack has undertaken a wide range of studies and has a breadth of professional experience in visual arts, film and television production. Experience in the film and television industry encompasses commercials, feature films, broadcast television and new media production. His experience includes all key creative positions in screen-based media. He has focused his research and teaching for over a decade and a half on a variety of aspects of the film and television industry in Ontario. Warrack's focus includes higher education in animation, visual effects, digital technology, and the business of film.

#### [4.3.2 Faculty Supervisory Loads](#)

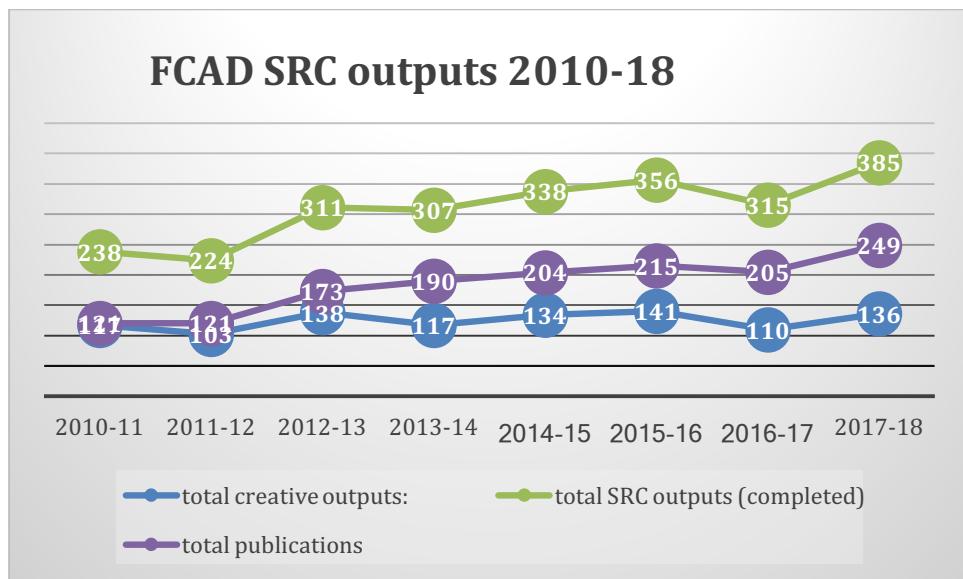
Students will engage supervisors primarily from the three supervising schools within FCAD along with other schools in FCAD that have graduate programs, as well as the university at large. At present there are 60 faculty members in FCAD holding a PhD and 30 more who hold a terminal master's degree. Collectively, they have considerable teaching and supervisory experience to draw from in this program. In addition, many of the full-time faculty members maintain an active record of teaching and supervision in doctoral programs such as the joint Ryerson/York University Communication and Culture program and the six existing FCAD graduate programs. Given the depth of the faculty pool and the fact that this is an interdisciplinary shared master's degree program, the additional supervisory load for the proposed intake level of students is considered to be manageable.

In summary, the current faculty cohort will be able administer the master's degree students with little change to its current operating structure.

## **5.0 QUALITY AND OTHER INDICATORS**

FCAD has built a strong base for SRC activities over the last decade. FCAD faculty members actively compete for external research grants at both the provincial and national levels. FCAD faculty members have successfully secured research grants from a variety of funding sources such as the Canada Foundation for Innovation, SSHRC, The Canada Council for the Arts, The Ontario Arts Council, MITACS, and NSERC programs. Table 9 presents a summary of SRC outputs by faculty in FCAD between 2010 - 2018.

*Table 9: FCAD SRC Outputs (2010 to 2018)*



According to information provided in the SRC section of FCAD RFA members' annual reports, SRC output has increased steadily over the past decade. The increased capacity is noted especially in publications. Publications in peer-reviewed scholarly journals, book chapters, monographs, conference proceeding as well as exhibitions, screenings, performances, and experience design are examples of SRC outputs recorded within the Faculty.

From the same source of information (the SRC section of FCAD RFA members' annual reports), the total amount of research funding held as Principal Investigator or as Co-Investigator in 2017-2018 was about \$5.8M. The total value of the research funding held that year in multi-year grants was about \$13.1M. Note that co-investigator funding may be administered by Ryerson or by another university.

Research Assuranceships (RAs) for masters' students will be supported by the research funding of faculty members. The SRC output of RFA members does provide evidence of a Faculty that has the capacity to ensure the intellectual quality of the student experience.

Faculty members most closely aligned with the MFA program have creative and critical outputs relevant to dramatic writing (see above 4.3). The creative and critical research is funded both internally by creative (seed) grants and externally by tri-council agency funding, such as SSHRC. Other outputs include: theatrical productions; writing and producing for film, television, web series and theatre.