

APRC Interim Report: From the Course Management Sub Committee Re: Make-Up Tests and Exams at Ryerson University

The Sub-Committee for the revision of the Course Management Policy is tasked with writing policy and procedures pertaining to make-up tests and exams through community consultation. This topic has been raised, with concerns from both students and faculty about the integrity of the examination process being compromised because we cannot currently meet the demanding needs of the community within the confines of the Test Centre parameters.

The University has a responsibility to ensure that:

- The integrity of the examination/test process is maintained for all exams/tests throughout the term and
- Students are provided with a monitored and professional environment to write exams/tests

Background Information:

At the December 2010 meeting of Senate the following motion was passed regarding the administration of make-up tests and exams at Ryerson.

That Senate request the Vice Provost Academic and the Vice Provost Students to jointly investigate the options available – including, but not necessarily restricted to, the establishment of a University-wide Examination Centre – to ensure that make-up tests and exams are conducted efficiently and with a high standard of academic integrity.

Based on this motion, 3 recommendations were brought forward to Senate in June of 2011:

1. *Effective local (i.e. department/faculty) practice related to the administration of make-up tests and exams should continue.*
2. *That a separately administered Make-up Test Centre be created for the central management of make-up tests and exams. This centre would require appropriate space*

and staffing and should be managed by Student Learning Support. Make-up exams could be scheduled with no need for a black out period.

- 3. That the Access Centre be responsible only for the administration of the testing needs of student registered with the Access Centre.*

In an update at the October 2011 Senate, in regards to a Make-Up Test Centre, *The Provost reported that a make-up test centre will be moving forward and will be opened in January 2012.*

At the January 28, 2014 Senate, the following information was raised and request tabled:

- The Test Centre was initially very successful in providing supervised and appropriate space to facilitate the writing of make-up tests in a timely manner, thus largely responding to the original concern; and
- The Test Centre has recently reduced the number and duration of time slots available for the scheduling of make-up tests, with the result that the Test Centre is no longer able to schedule make-up tests in a timely manner, which raises serious concerns about a University-wide return to the practices in existence before the Make-Up Test Centre was created; therefore
- The Vice Provost Students be asked to provide Senate with a report on the activity of the Make-Up Test Centre, the demands made upon it, and its current ability to meet faculty and student demand; and to make such recommendations as may be necessary to ensure that the Centre is able to meet University-wide demand for the timely supervision of make-up tests beginning with the Winter 2014 term.

In the April 2014 Report, the Vice Provost Students explained what had been done recently:

- We have restored available make up hours for the rest of the term to previous last year's level and will close with a deficit again.
- We have maintained a blackout for make-up tests during final exams for two reasons. 1) All staff are needed to manage the needs of the Access Centre clients writing their finals, and 2) We don't want to require students to write make-up tests during the same period that they are preparing for and writing their final exams.
- We have submitted again through the budget process a request for additional funds to cover invigilation costs in the 13/14 academic year.
- We have asked the test centre to explore options to build additional capacity into their processes and systems as a mechanism to increase available spaces based on a demand threshold.

That was the last report made available to Senate on this subject.

Evaluation of Current Situation:

The current data for make-up exams as of the completion of the 2017-2018 academic year:

1. Current make-up test booking availability:

- Make-up Test/Exam Location: 1 room VIC-508, Victoria Building, 285 Victoria Street.
- Available Days and Times:
Wednesday: 2 pm to 5 pm (3 hours), and 6 pm to 9 pm (3 hours)
Friday: 12 pm to 4 pm (4 hours)
- Typically there is a 4-6 week wait to schedule a make-up test in the Test Centre therefore faculty and students make alternate arrangements that may compromise the examination process and/or integrity.

2. The space, staff, and invigilator resources allocated by Ryerson for the make-up testing service are drawn from the resources allocated for providing test accommodations for students with disabilities (Senate Policy 159, Human Rights Code, and AODA legislation).

3. Relevant stats related to student and faculty use of the Test Centre:

- In 2008/2009 there were **1,044 students** registered with Academic Accommodation Support (then Access Centre); in 2017/2018 there were **3,309 students** registered: 2265 more students (increase of 317%).
- In 2008/2009 there were **6,712 test accommodations** provided by the Test Centre function (not called Test Centre at that time). There was no make-up test function in 2008/2009.
- In **2017/2018** there were **22,203 tests** provided by the Test Centre; of which **4,400 were make-up tests (19.8%)**.
- In 2014/2015 there were **16,790 tests** provided by the Test Centre; of which **3,446 were make-up tests (20.5%)**.
- In 2011/2012 there were **10,741 tests** provided by the Test Centre; of which **2,380 were make-up tests (22.2%)**.

4. Information about staff/resources:

- 2 FT staff in 2010-2011 + Coordinator added in 2012 = 3 staff
- 4 FT staff in 2017-2018 (including Coordinator)
- 70 Invigilators to provide invigilation for Test Accommodations and Make-Up Testing [These are typically graduate students who are trained to invigilate]

5. Blackout times for make-up testing

Under current conditions, blackout times for make-up testing must continue to be imposed as the demand for test accommodations continue to increase. Currently blackout times are during final exams and midterms: essentially 4 months of the year (February, April, October, and December).

Additional Impacts Due To Timing of Make-Up Exams:

INC grades not being resolved in a timely manner as per policy:

- If a student has an INC and the course is a pre-requisite for a course being taken in the following term, the INC must be resolved as soon as possible within the first 2 weeks of the new term. We currently cannot meet these timeline needs and students are staying in courses that they sometimes complete before they even complete the INC component. There are instances where student's INC's turn to F's but receive a passing grade in the following course.

Recommendations of the Course Management Sub Committee:

The Office of the Vice Provost Students, the Office of the Vice Provost Academic and the Senate Office should work together to:

- Coordinate a make-up test/exam process and logistics, to include both final exams and exams throughout the term.
- Centrally-coordinate rooms and spaces for administering make-up exams and tests where appropriate invigilation will take place
- Determine who the responsible office is to oversee the make-up test/exam process (is this a Test Centre Responsibility, a Registrar's responsibility through the Exam Manager, another area all together?)
- Create and communicate make-up test/exam procedures to which the Ryerson community would be expected to adhere.

Possible Logistics may include:

- Adapting the current make-up test online student registration system to be able to increase its capacity for larger registrations and more rooms (note the current system is capable of expanding)
- Making better use of the existing large invigilator pool within the University
- Making better use of both traditional classrooms when available (such as during exam periods and/or before terms start) as well as other spaces (for example POD250 / Snack Stop)
 - For make-up Final Exams, creating centrally-booked invigilated shifts for one week after each term end to accommodate *en masse* opportunities (ie., late December or early January; May, and late August). These dates should be made public and incorporated into significant dates and the University calendar so students know when their make-up exams will be if they do not attend their final exam.
- For make-up tests during the term, creating centrally-booked invigilated shifts on a regular basis, beyond the current space and invigilation resources run by the Test Centre

Summary

Preliminary investigation indicates that the main issue is one of **capacity**, and that capacity is largely determined by the availability of spaces in which to write make-up tests/exams, and by the ability to hire trained invigilators. The issue of space can be improved, if not completely resolved, through logistical changes such as those enumerated above. Increasing the number of available invigilators is obviously a resource question, but one that should not be viewed as an outright cost, as this employment would certainly be welcomed by graduate students.

Other Revenue Opportunities to Be Considered:

Currently Ryerson is unable to accommodate the needs from external exam requests in which students taking distance courses or courses at another University are required to be proctored in a monitored testing environment. U of T and York currently allow this to occur at their institutions and the charge ranges from \$120 to \$200 per exam. Increasing room space throughout the term and having make-ups with no blackout periods would allow us to take in this new revenue.