

Meeting of the GC Policy Committee
Monday, May 9, 2011; 12:00 pm – 2:00 pm
Graduate Students Centre, Room 200

Present: Helen Burt, Douglas Harris, Beth Haverkamp, Peter Leung, Philip Loewen (Chair), Jamie Paris, Andrew Patterson, Jenny Phelps, Susan Porter, Lisa Pountney (minutes), Max Read, Clive Roberts, Curtis Suttle, Joyce Tom.

Guests: Brendan Morey, Shelley Small (on behalf of Brent Skura), Rhodri Windsor-Liscombe

Regrets: Hugh Brock, Daniel Granot, Darrin Lehman, Cyril Leung, Cindy Prescott, Brent Skura

1. Adoption of Agenda

Philip proposed changing the order of the agenda under business arising to run B, C, A.

<i>All</i>	}	<i>That the order of the agenda in the Business Arising section be changed to B, C, A, and the agenda be approved.</i>
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Carried.

2. Minutes of last meeting (February 22, 2010)

<i>All</i>	}	<i>That the minutes of the February 22, 2011 meeting be approved.</i>
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Carried.

3. Business arising

a. Discussion: Limiting working hours for graduate students

Philip began by commenting that there are two parts to this issue. We have rules limiting the working hours of graduate students on scholarships, and then there is the broader issue of working regulations for all PhD students.

Philip informed the committee that the Scholarships Committee has been working on the part of this issue that relates to graduate students on scholarships, and welcomed Rhodri Windsor-Liscombe and Brendan Morey into the discussion.

Rhodri advised the committee that we do not want to approach this situation as a collection agency; we do however need to have proactive recognition that there is a problem. The purpose of having limits on working hours is to protect the progress of students through their degrees, and we would like to aim to have a policy in place that is as fair and as transparent as possible. We would like to develop a policy that is very clear to everyone involved, a policy that has inbuilt flexibility and natural justice within the appeal process. We do need to demonstrate to the Tri-Council that we recognise there is an issue, and that we are dealing with it in an appropriate manner.

Brendan began by commenting that the Scholarships Committee, in collaboration with the Dean, have been working on a new policy, and proceeded to circulate this draft policy to the committee members. Brendan highlighted a couple of changes the scholarships committee had made, including allocating a value to the scholarships received by the student and to make it more explicit that there is a process through which students may request exceptions to this policy under certain circumstances. A form will be developed in order to facilitate this, and will ask for specific information that will then be used to determine whether a student is eligible to be exempt from this policy. The criteria that might result in an exempt case have been discussed and may include whether the work is related to students' research, whether they are making substantial progress according to their supervisor, and whether there might be needs-based issues.

The intention is to raise this draft policy at Graduate Council on Thursday and solicit feedback from the wider graduate community. Philip reminded the group that we will not be making any decisions on this policy today; it is more of an opportunity for collaborative discussion.

Jamie commented that the GSS would like needs based considerations built into the policy, and to see some data around how much it costs to live and study in Vancouver, as they do not necessarily support the benchmark level of \$17,300 at which the 12 hour limit commences.

Andrew wondered if there could be a mechanism for redress on behalf of the student, for example could the GSS be a part of the adjudication process. Brendan doesn't think this would be too much of an issue, and will look into it.

Beth asked if we have any information on what other institutions are doing, as this affects recruitment. Beth has heard of cases of people from outside the province declining offers to UBC as the cost of living is too high, and suggested that perhaps the Tri-Council agencies need to reassess their guidelines on working restrictions.

Brendan commented that we will be raising this as a potential topic at CAGS in November. There was research done on other universities, and it appears that most of them are following the guidelines that the Tri-Council has formulated.

Brendan commented that the Student Financial Assistance Office has metrics to assess how much is enough to live on in Vancouver.

***Action:** Brendan will ascertain from the Student Financial Assistance Office how much is enough to live and study on in Vancouver, and will report back to the committee.*

The GSS is supportive of the draft policy that the Scholarships Committee has created, as long as there is a reasonable appeal process in place so that the people they represent can feel comfortable knowing that there won't be injustice.

Philip invited the committee to read the document from the Council of Ontario Universities entitled "University-Related Employment for Full Time Graduate Students" more closely. It is a kind of umbrella agreement among Ontario universities that applies to every graduate student. Paragraph 3 of this document establishes that while the university can't monitor or enforce employment activities off campus, they can at least ensure that they do not employ students for on-campus work of more than 10 hours per week. Philip would be in favour of articulating something like this at UBC.

Ontario can hold to this agreement because so many of their universities will not admit students without full funding.

Required paid internships would not be affected by the policy.

Discussed changes to wording: be clear that student's options are 1) reduce working hours, 2) apply for an exception to policy (using a still-to-be-developed form), or 3) give up the scholarship.

How would this apply in the case of a full time employee of UBC (who is therefore receiving a full time salary) embarking on a graduate degree. Philip suggested that this would be a scenario where we talk about the direction of transition across the 12 hour barrier, in other words if you are already working more than 12 hours a week before you enter into graduate education, you can continue to work more than 12 hours a week. If you are not working more than 12 hours per week, then we would refrain from making additions that would push you over the line. UBC doesn't have any alternative to full time study at the doctoral level.

In the collective agreements we openly encourage staff to pursue degree programs. It would be inequitable to deny someone who works full time outside of the university when we encourage staff from inside the university. Noted that some master's programs, e.g., MHA are aimed at people who are full-time professionals.

Committee may revisit the discussion on full time and part time doctoral study. We are behind the times on this issue and are missing out on opportunities.

***Action:** Philip will add this to the agenda of our next meeting in September 2011.*

b. Parental leave for graduate students

For information only, at this point. Jenny began by stating that she didn't think this was at the stage of asking for a motion, but wanted to bring it to the committee's attention.

This issue was raised when PhD student in Anthropology, who was expecting her first child, approached the GSS to talk to them about concerns around graduate students becoming parents. A working group was struck to look at how the university could have both academic and financial policies that support students who are experiencing the arrival of a child while participating in graduate study.

Currently UBC has a parental leave policy. It is like any leave of absence: you can take 1, 2 or 3 terms (these must be full terms, conforming to the dates in the UBC Calendar) and students on leave are cut off from access to student services and may not make any academic progress.

The working group looked into how other universities in North America support graduate students who become parents during their studies, and have now come up with a draft Parental Accommodation Period policy. This period could be up to 8 weeks, and those 8 weeks could start at any time (disregarding the official boundary dates defining an academic term). During this accommodation period, the student would retain student status, and therefore would still be able to access student services such as the student health centre. The student would be able to make academic progress if they choose to, and there would be no interruption of any funding they might be receiving. The student would continue to pay tuition and fees, but the academic expectations on the student during this time would be flexible. The policy is meant to encourage the student and supervisor to have an up-front discussion about how the student would be accommodated during this period. Part of the parental accommodation period would be an automatic extension of university deadlines for one term. Programs would also be expected to modify deadlines for internal requirements. This draft was based on models seen at Berkeley and the University of Michigan.

About 60 students a year go on parental leave. However, it is likely that there are many more students who have a child and never take a leave of absence so that their scholarship is not interrupted.

The last paragraph of the document refers to a “Potential additional option for exploration: paid parental leave”. This is an approach that has been taken by at least two Canadian universities (Waterloo and Queens). Jenny Phelps is waiting to receive information from these two institutions on the financial implications of providing this service. We’re quite interested in investigating this option further, but we would need to identify a new source of funding in order to create this parental bursary.

There was general positive feedback from the committee on the idea of the Parental Accommodation Policy. Some concerns that were raised:

- eight weeks is not long enough (policies at Berkeley and Michigan stipulated only 6 weeks)
- maternal parental leave should be more generous than paternal leave
- how to fund replacements while a student is taking an extended absence
- general funding implications

We need data in order to ascertain the scope of the funding realities, and should probably discuss this with the funding agencies as well.

NSERC and CIHR (but not SSHRC) have policies that provide additional funding to replace grant-funded students who are taking a parental leave of absence

In the case of the 8-week parental accommodation, the funding would not be extended by 8 weeks, but would continue uninterrupted for the normal duration of the funding.

For grants where students must turn in time sheets there would be problems continuing the funding during a parental accommodation leave. Also labs would not be able to replace RAs on parental accommodation as 8 weeks isn't long enough to do this, but the lab would lose the services of the RAs during that time.

One of the main things we are trying to accomplish is to have another option other than taking a leave of absence and having the student's funding and services cut off.

It might be helpful to separate the academic and financial accommodation, since the financial aspect of this policy is going to be a lot harder to achieve.

Possible mechanisms for funding this program were discussed, including graduate students paying a nominal fee, which would then be matched by the university.

Should consider a "menu" approach: a set of options from which students could put together an arrangement that is suitable for them, and that would include a graduate return to work.

The GSS would consider supporting the requirement of a contribution from graduate students, provided there was University money available as well.

There are several funding sources already in place for graduate students who have a child. Students who have a Tri-Council scholarship have a paid parental leave from the scholarship. The TA Union also has a fund for students to access, so we wouldn't be looking to fund all students, just graduate students who don't already have access to parental support. This would enable more equitable funding for all students who are becoming parents, regardless of the source and nature of their funding.

***Action:** Jenny will gather data from Waterloo and Queens as to how many students utilize their paid parental leave policy.*

c. Graduate Council membership entitlement

Philip presented his revised motion, which was developed in consultation with Dr. Evans and Dean Porter, to the committee.

There has been a slight amendment to the formula for assigning representation on Graduate Council. Philip invited the committee members to view the description of the formula and resulting distribution of seats on the handout materials supplied.

The new formula is as follows:

Of the 75 elected Faculty seats on the Graduate Council, one seat is assigned to each disciplinary Faculty or functional equivalent, excluding the Faculty of Graduate Studies. This step assigns 12 seats. The remaining 63 positions are then divided between Faculties (or functional equivalents, including the Faculty of Graduate Studies) in proportion to the number of graduate students in each Faculty. This calculation is based on Full-Time Equivalent [FTE] student numbers effective November 1 in the year preceding the reallocation.

This formula provides representation for the Interdisciplinary Studies Graduate Program; concern that they were not represented was one of the major objections to the previously proposed formula.

The term ‘elect’ was replaced by ‘select’ as in some Faculties representatives of Graduate Council have been arrived at by acclamation, and not voting.

Susan raised the issue that medical clinical faculty are not members of the Faculty of Graduate Studies. Those who supervise graduate students must request special permission to do so. The committee discussed the implications of this at length. Some points raised:

Over 250 faculty members at the professorial rank in the Faculty of Medicine are not eligible to supervise graduate students because they’re only involved in the MD program – they’re not associated with a graduate program and so cannot be members of the Faculty of Graduate Studies (who must be Assistant, Associate, or full Professor at tenure, tenure-track, grant tenure, grant tenure-track, and involved in a graduate program.) Some Faculty of Medicine professors have been approved to supervise students and are fully involved in graduate education – about a dozen.

Criteria for membership in Faculty of Graduate Studies were approved only a few years ago. Part of the problem with Faculty of Medicine professors is that if they’re paid by, e.g., the Cancer Agency, they aren’t considered to be UBC professors. Tenure and tenure-track professors are covered by the Faculty Association Collective Agreement, Article 21 – but this does not apply to clinical faculty.

Suggestion: could we say only members of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and those clinical professors who have been approved to supervise graduate students be allowed to vote at Grad Council? May not be worth changing FoGS membership policy because it only affects a few professors.

Joyce: getting the current definition passed by Senate took seven years. University Counsel was very specific; because Article 21 of the Collective Agreement does not apply to clinical professors, the Faculty of Graduate Studies has no recourse if such professors “misbehave”. Article 21 is the procedure for terminating employment at the University for cause.

The committee decided that this was a separate issue from Graduate Council Membership.

<i>Philip Loewen</i> <i>Doug Harris</i>	}	<i>That the proposal, including four motions to be taken to Senate in order to update the Membership of the Graduate Council, be approved.</i>
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4. New Business

a. Grandfathering three-year B Arch to M Arch degree

The School of Architecture would like to retroactively convert some three-year professional Bachelor of Architecture (B.Arch.) degrees to three-year professional Master of Architecture (M.Arch.) degrees, and referred the committee to the report submitted by the School of Architecture which outlines their case.

They propose to upgrade to an M.Arch. designation, on request, any B.Arch. graduate from the period 1969 – 1993 who also holds a bachelor’s degree in some other discipline, as they believe that they have done enough to deserve a master’s designation.

Questions: what is behind the push for these actions? Are there people for whom this will really make a difference? Philip raised an example of an instructor at the Emily Carr University of Art and Design that felt his career prospects were in jeopardy because a bachelor’s degree was not enough anymore. While the committee was sympathetic there were concerns that changing the degree awarded could give the wrong impression.

The proposal includes provision for students who were awarded bachelor’s degrees from 1993 – 2003 to also upgrade their degrees by doing additional work. Architecture is proposing a 9-credit “creative challenge”. Need more details on the nature of this extra activity; it would need to go through the Curriculum Committee as it is effectively changing the requirements for a degree. The committee was very concerned that the master’s degree that was changed from a bachelor’s degree might be misinterpreted by people who know the true value of a 1969-1993 BArch degree. The School of Architecture claims that this reclassification of existing degrees is also happening across North America although everyone is doing it a bit differently.

In the case of the Emily Carr instructor it might be possible for Stephen Toope to write a letter explaining the value of the bachelor’s degree in Architecture prior to 1993.

From 1993 – 2003 is problematic, as at that time the program offered both bachelor’s and master’s degrees, and students chose which degree they wanted to do. Before 1993 only bachelor’s degrees were offered.

Jaime GSS: if pre-1993 did the work equivalent to a master’s degree, then they should all be changed to master’s regardless of whether or not they had a bachelor’s degree prior to admission. There was some agreement, but a concern was that in that case we would be indicating that these students met the admission requirements for graduate study.

The committee was unable to reach consensus due to time restraints. Questions raised will be sent to Architecture for response.

5. Adjournment of the meeting

<i>Beth Haverkamp</i> <i>Clive Roberts</i>	}	To adjourn the meeting.
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Carried.

6. Next meeting: Fall, 2011