

## MINUTES

### Meeting of the GC Policy Committee Wednesday, 13 September 2017, 12:30–13:50

Room 203, Graduate Student Centre, 6371 Crescent Road

**Present:** Ljiljana Biukovic, Thomas Chang, Matthew Evenden, Lutz Lampe, Mark MacLachlan, Susan Porter, John Ries, Wendy Robinson, Jennifer Shapka, Larry Walker (Chair), Zhaoming Xu

**Regrets:** Clive Roberts, Yousry El-Kassaby

**Staff and invited guests:** Max Read, Josephine Ok (minutes)

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#### 1. Introductions and regrets

New member: Lutz Lampe (ECE)

#### 2. Adoption of the agenda

All	}	That the agenda be approved.
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Carried

#### 3. Minutes of the meeting held 3 May 2017\*

All	}	That the minutes of the meeting held on May 3, 2017 be approved.
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Carried

#### 4. Chair's remarks

Larry provided an update on the delay-in-start-of-program policy. This policy was approved at the last Graduate Council meeting held on May 4, 2017, but did not reach Senate in time for approval in the spring. The policy will be presented at the next Senate meeting in September.

Reimagining the PhD Symposium: All members were encouraged to attend the upcoming symposium on September 29.

#### 5. Approval of candidates for degrees (N = 753)

Mark MacLachlan Wendy Robinson	}	That the candidates for degrees (September conferral) be approved and forwarded to the Senate for approval, and that the Dean, in consultation with the Registrar, be empowered to make any necessary adjustments.
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Carried

#### 6. Doctoral exams report (2016-17)

Larry provided a report on doctoral exams conducted in 2016-17. A total of 534 exams were held, with 12 problematic exams. Problematic exams included: having a negative external examiner's report; a need for re-examination; unsatisfactory dissertation; self-plagiarism; and the inclusion of a research

chapter from before PhD program. Although 12 exams were problematic, overall data from the last 9 years showed that the number of problematic exams has gone down from previous years (there were 23 problematic exams in 2015-16).

A member asked whether any re-examinations have resulted in a fail, to which Larry answered no. In some cases, one external examiner may recommend that the dissertation is ready to proceed to defense whereas the other external examiner does not, but G+PS usually allows the student to proceed to defense.

Larry noted that one problematic case involved three dissertations where chapters were shared among the students – the problem was alerted to us by an external examiner, who thought the contribution of one chapter to a student’s dissertation was minimal and belonged more rightfully in another student’s dissertation. None of the students had indicated in the preface to the dissertation that some of the dissertation chapters also appeared in another student’s dissertation. G+PS required that each preface be corrected in that regard, but the decision regarding the appropriateness of these shared chapters was left to the examining committees.

A short discussion ensued regarding collaborative dissertation – G+PS currently does not have a policy, but collaborative work is being practiced to a considerable extent. It’s important for students to acknowledge the contributions of their collaborators in the preface and appropriately in text. The core chapters can be collaborative, but the introductory and concluding chapters must be unique. In regards to collaborative dissertations, many logistical questions must be considered, such as determining who is responsible to supervise fair collaboration?

Larry noted that finding chairs for thesis defenses was sometimes a challenge, and he requested assistance from members on finding chairs.

## **6. New business**

### **a) Policy regarding annual supervisory committee meetings – for approval**

This policy is meant to formalize a long-standing expectation that supervisory committees meet with their students at least once a year. The need for this policy arose out of some problems where supervisors were not aligned in monitoring a student’s progress.

Some best practices to enforce this policy were shared, such as to have a supervisory chair in the committee to lead the meetings. Graduate programs can decide how best to ensure policy is practiced. This policy benefits both student and supervisor: a student has the power to ensure meetings are held, and supervisors are able to request termination of study if the student disappears.

A member asked, can the committee change after a student reaches candidacy? Yes, but all non-G+PS committee members must be approved by G+PS prior to serving on a supervisory committee.

Some concerns were addressed: the administrative impact of this policy can be a burden, as well as the effectiveness of having such a policy. It was noted that some of the most productive professors with the most students and largest research load have the least amount of time, so this practice may be burdensome and ineffective. Some members felt that a statement to encourage annual meetings was sufficient, rather than enforcing an annual meeting. Also, who would follow up to ensure that this policy is being practiced?

A member noted that annual meetings would enhance the quality of research because the supervisors are in the direct field. This is not an administrative task really, it helps to enhance research.

Members agreed that a student could meet with one supervisor 1:1 if not all members are available.

After some discussion, a member suggested a motion to table this policy until further discussion with the members' faculties. Are there any creative alternatives?

<i>Mark MacLachlan</i> <i>Lutz Lampe</i>	}	<i>To table this policy for now for further discussion among the faculties. Also to add in vocabulary on page 1 of the proposal form, to include 'The supervisory committee must meet <b>with the student</b> at least once a year...'</i>
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Carried

## 7. Other business

A member asked whether there was any pushback from departments regarding the lay abstract, now referred to as the lay summary. In one department, there were some objections as the disciplinary subject is difficult to translate into conversational English. Max offered to handle any questions regarding the lay summary.

## 8. Adjournment

*Lunch provided*

\*Minutes of previous meetings are available here:

<http://www.grad.ubc.ca/faculty-staff/graduate-council/academic-policy-committee-previous-meetings>