

MINUTES
Meeting of the Grad Policy Committee

Wednesday, 3rd November 2021, 12:30-13:50
Location: Zoom

Present: Laura Sly (Chair), Susan Porter, Jolanta Aleksejuniene, Teresa Dobson, Brett Eaton, Michael Hunt, John Ries, Mark MacLachlan, Yousry El-Kassaby, Thomas Chang

Staff: Max Read, Arafat Safdar

1. Introductions and regrets

Jocelyn Stacey – Regrets
Sean Smukler - Regrets

2. Adoption of the agenda

<i>All</i>	}	<i>That the agenda be approved (with a change in the order of things to be discussed)</i>
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Carried

3. Motion to Approve the Minutes

<i>All</i>	}	<i>That the minutes be approved</i>
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Carried

4. Business

There were no specific business items to vote on.

5. Discussion Items

- Joint PhD – Jenny Phelps
- Discussion of a proposal - Barbara Weber
- A general discussion on the admission process

6. Discussion

Joint PhD

- Jenny mentioned that she reached out to some students to get their feedback on joint PhD. In response to a survey she had sent out, most of them thought of it as an outstanding experience – Among the challenges, they described the administrative process as being difficult and stressful – She also spoke with a couple of faculty members who thought that the students would be less invested if they are not working under their supervision – there was also a logistical concern about being able to access funding if a student is not

registered in one institution – She mentioned that the students would be eligible to receive a formal letter from the Dean of Graduate Studies and that they would also be eligible for housing at UBC. She further described it as a low-barrier improved way for the doctoral students to spend time at UBC - She acknowledged that there would still be a laborious negotiation process between the universities but the individual student plan would be simplified.

- Yousry commented that ‘sharing administrative responsibility’ is a grey area and that the administrative roles need to be defined clearly – Jenny acknowledged the challenge and talked about bringing the Vice Provost International office more into the negotiations. Later, Brett and Michael also talked about the potential challenges that could be caused by the bureaucratic wrangling.
- Thomas asked if the student plan included the academic portions from both the places. Jenny said that for the Joint PhD program to go into effect, there would first have to be an institutional agreement which would lay out all the academic requirements.
- Bhushan questioned if there was a need for this pathway, especially when the VIRS pathway is already there – He said that one of the challenges of the new pathway is that MoUs are signed often without the backing of any funding (e.g. the program automatically dies when a PI with the funding leaves) – In her response, Jenny highlighted the key differences between the two pathways emphasizing that Joint PhD would be a way to demonstrate a stronger affiliation with UBC.
- Mark suggested the idea of putting a price tag on the Joint PhD, such as an administrative fee for the program (VIRS already charges an administrative fee). Jenny thought of it as an interesting idea.

Change in ISGP

- Barbara presented a proposal whereby the Faculty at ISGP wanted to change the wording to not allow a direct transition to PhD for the students who have not written an MA thesis – She said that such students take longer and require extensions more often.
- Susan noted that in most programs, it was the supervisory committee that made the judgement about a student being ready or not. She asked if, in the cases mentioned by Barbara in support of her proposed amendment, the committee was prepared for this move? Barbara mentioned ISGP faculty members have no grounds to say ‘no’ to such a transition request (since it is allowed for as per the policy under discussion).
- Brett noted that a lot of faculty members in the humanities would want such a change but asked if a mere change in wording would help achieve the desired effect? He also suggested that the aims of such a change in policy be listed clearly in the calendar entry. Barbara agreed with that.
- Mark asked about any concerns that such a change might discourage top students from joining the program, as they would see no direct pathway to PhD. Barbara did not think this would be a deterrent. Mark also asked about other graduate programs with similar restrictions.
- Teresa asked if removing the crossed-out text from the existing calendar entry would be a better approach to deal with this – Barbara agreed with Teresa’s proposal and everyone approved unanimously.
- Susan briefly talked about admissions at UBC – to be discussed at the next meeting.

7. **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 13:37.