

Meeting of the GC Policy Committee

Tuesday, April 2, 2013; 12:30 pm – 1:50 pm

Graduate Student Centre, Room 200

Present: Colum Connolly, Beth Haverkamp, Philip Loewen (Chair), Jenny Phelps, Susan Porter, Cindy Prescott, Max Read, Chris Roach, Curtis Suttle, Jessica Iverson (minutes)

Guests: Tom Chang

Regrets: Akram Alfantazi, Daniel Granot, Douglas Harris, Peter Leung, Michael Richards, Clive Roberts, Marina von Keyserlingk, Kishor Wasan, Daniel Weary

1. Adoption of Agenda

All	}	<i>That the agenda be approved.</i>
-----	---	-------------------------------------

Carried.

2. Minutes of Last Meeting (January 15, 2013)

All	}	<i>That the minutes of the meeting held January 15, 2013 be approved.</i>
-----	---	---

Carried.

3. Chair's Remarks

a. Doctoral Examinations

There were 89 doctoral defences held in January, February and March. All ended with passing recommendations, although 14 chair reports are still outstanding. Approximately 4% of these students have requested 6 months to complete revisions to their dissertations.

Philip updated the Committee on the case of the one doctoral student who successfully defended but did not submit the required revisions for over a year. The student eventually submitted and the issue has been resolved. It is not clear what caused the lengthy delay.

In cases where external examiners indicate a student's dissertation is not ready for oral defence, Philip reviewed his standard response for the Committee. He follows up with a telephone conversation to the external examiner to ask key questions. He clarifies UBC's doctoral examination procedures and outlines next steps. Some external examiners do not realize that dissertations do not have to be perfect before proceeding to oral defence. Most often the concerns that trigger a round of required revisions instead of an oral exam are serious and clearly articulated in the external reviewer's report. However, in one recent case an external examiner whose objections were primarily editorial changed a negative recommendation into a positive one once the expectations were clarified.

The doc exams unit has recently handled a two complicated cases:

1. One student's thesis and presentation were deemed acceptable, but the student's responses in question period were not satisfactory, particularly with regard to general knowledge of the field of study. It was decided that the student be allowed to resume the oral questioning at a later date. Philip chaired the second round of questioning and the student's performance was still rather uneven. The case was reviewed by the Dean, who ultimately decided that the student should pass.

2. Another student submitted their dissertation to first external examiner and the report was returned negative. The student revised the dissertation and resubmitted to the original examiner, and to a second examiner who was unaware of the negative report. Both reports on the revised dissertation came back negative. Our normal flowchart indicates automatic failure in this situation. However, the Dean decided to launch an investigation into the credibility of the externals' reports. Philip reminded the Committee that external examiners are nominated by a student's research team, and are experts in the field being examined. Now a UBC colleague has been invited to do a "blind assessment" comparing the revised work as submitted with the objections raised by the external examiners, and the student's responses to them. This assessment is currently in progress.

Susan pointed out that there are scholarly differences of opinion in the student's field of study. Jenny asked why Susan felt it was warranted to intervene after all reports were returned negative. Susan explained that the student's supervisory committee thought the dissertation was exceptionally strong, but the external examiners disagreed, hence her involvement.

b. Theological Colleges

Theological colleges provide education and credentials whose applicability to graduate study at UBC varies considerably between granting institutions. Recently a group of FoGS colleagues met with Thomas Schneider, Sara Milstein and Robert Cousland from the Department of Classical, Near Eastern and Religious Studies to discuss this issue. The CNERS group explained that some theological schools are very scholarly and that their graduates are well qualified for further study at UBC. Susan mentioned the FoGS website is unclear with regards to accepting students from theological colleges; the Faculty actually assesses students on a case-by-case basis. The CNERS representatives will send Philip criteria for what they think constitutes a solid academic basis accumulated in a theology school. UBC has an open channel of communication with the local affiliated colleges on campus, and some of these colleges want to send

their students to grad school at UBC. Conversations will continue with the theological colleges after the CNERS group has provided their criteria.

4. Business Arising/Updates

a. E-Votes Since Previous Meeting

The Committee voted on two instances of PhD candidates who needed to have their cases forwarded to Senate so that they could graduate quickly (on rolling graduation). One student was dying of cancer and the other had received a post-doc at the Mayo Clinic but could not enter the United States without a degree certificate. The Committee voted by email and all votes cast were positive; no voter said there was a need for a face-to-face discussion.

Philip asked if the e-voting system (with its mandatory roll-over to a face-to-face session when unanimity fails) made sense to the Committee. Beth said it did, and that she was happy the Committee had been able to vote in these particular cases.

Susan said the policy on rolling graduate has already been passed, but there is currently no system to support it. E-voting will likely be used more often once rolling graduation is implemented as a practice.

b. Visiting Graduate Students (VGRS)

Jenny updated the Committee on the progress of the Visiting Graduate Student (VGRS) designation. She said the process has been slowed down by the fact that higher levels of the UBC administration wanted to see a comprehensive policy that covered both undergraduate and graduate students coming to UBC from another university for a research experience. The undergraduate side is now catching up to the graduate.

There have been complicated issues related to fees, and unfortunately the fees continue to grow because of rules related to what can be opted out of and what cannot. Enrolment Services and the UBC Counsel are now reviewing the documents; eventually there will be a policy that covers both groups of students with one overall fee mechanism. In the end, this policy will not be the responsibility of the Faculty of Graduate Studies. Thus Jenny doesn't think it will come back to the Committee for further deliberation. The next opportunities to speak on the matter will be at meetings of the Senate Admissions Committee, Senate Policy Committee and Senate itself.

Discussion ensued:

- Curtis expressed concern that the higher levels of administration at UBC may not be well versed in the nature of research. Without proper consultation, he is concerned about how this policy will impact students.
- Susan said the proposed policy is similar to those in place at other universities (like the University of Toronto). This has given administrators comfort that the proposed fee structure is appropriate – others are even higher.

- Fees differ depending on how long a student visits UBC; Jenny estimates \$2,000 a year. There are mandatory fees (iMed insurance, AMS, etc.) that are attached to student status, and it was decided that these visitors must be considered students.
- Beth asked if anyone has evaluated how the fee structures have impacted students at other institutions. Jenny said the best information they have received is from the University of Toronto, and there is a problem with compliance at that institution.
- Chris asked what justification the AMS gives for charging fees to visiting students. Jenny said she was not part of that conversation, however Connie Lin, past GSS President, raised the same question as Chris. No clear answer has been received.
- Visiting students will not be eligible for the UPass.
- Chris asked what percentage of International House resources visiting students use. Jenny said it is small, but nonetheless an unfunded draw.
- Susan said the Strategic and Decision Support Group (SDS) did an analysis of the costs associated with VGRS and the total was high, although it was close to the pre-existing Go Global fee.
- Susan said that compliance will be low if the fee is high.
- Beth said there are challenges to creating a policy that serves both undergraduate and graduate student.
- Chris asked for clarification on what a visiting student actually is; he said his lab often has visiting scholars and post-doctoral students. Curtis said the VGRS policy will remove that avenue. Jenny said visiting students must be tracked. Susan noted that these students are UBC's responsibility while they are here.
- There was general agreement that there needs to be a fee tied to the mechanism for tracking students, however problems are arising because of mandatory fees (AMS, iMed, etc.) that students will be required to pay.
- Cindy asked whose idea it was to create a policy that serves both undergraduate and graduate students. Jenny said the idea came from the VP Students office.
- Curtis asked if UBC students have to pay when they visit other institutions.
- Beth is concerned about compliance on the part of both students and faculty. Susan said compliance is the largest concern. Curtis said it would be helpful to have data on compliance to similar policies.
- Tom said fees are a major concern in his Faculty (Pharmaceutical Sciences).
- Beth is concerned faculty members will avoid designating students as VGRS to bypass the fee.

- Curtis said there are other financial hurdles for visiting students, such as accommodation and travel.
- Beth said the policy should be revisited before it is moved forward for a decision.
- Jenny asked if there is a “tipping point” with regards to the fee. Cindy said \$400, and that her Faculty (Forestry) would pay the fee for their visitors. Jenny said that fee may not be enough to call the visitors “students,” and without student status, the visitors will not be able to access student resources on campus.
- Jenny said she will take the Committee’s comments back to the working group as there are too many concerns about compliance.
- Curtis said that although the visiting students may not have completed their PhD degrees, they fulfil the same function as visiting scholars. Cindy added that having students visit UBC is a good recruitment tool.
- Curtis said VP Research is the appropriate office to review the policy.
- Jenny said new visiting research programs launch this summer, and the University needs a structure for enrolling and tracking the visitors.
- Beth said students should only pay for the resources they are using. Jenny suggested that there may be a way to work around granting the visitors student status.
- Jenny said the administrative fee tied to the policy is roughly \$400 to \$500 for the year.
- Curtis said, overall, the Committee is unhappy with the visiting student designation; it does not have the same implications for undergraduate students as it does for graduate.

Action: Philip will invite Dr. Anna Kindler and Janet Teasdale to the next meeting (May 7, 2013) to further discuss the VGRS policy and the Committee’s concerns.

5. New Business

a. **Authorship Agreements (Item was discussed before Minimum Residency Requirement.)**

Susan shared a draft authorship agreement that was created by a department to clarify the roles and responsibilities of graduate students and their supervisors in producing scholarly publications based on students' work. She asked for the Committee’s thoughts on the wording of the agreement, and for a sense of how members have dealt with similar issues themselves. She also provided a collection of other similar agreements (from FoGS and other institutions).

The sample agreement suggested that the senior author(s) reserved the right to add or remove co-authors. Susan noted that in the recently-revised Policy #85, a student must be included as an author if the work

includes that student's data, while no person, including the student, can be included as an author without their consent. Curtis said he thought the data was owned by the University. Susan clarified that UBC is the steward of the data; however that data cannot be included in a publication unless the student is included as an author and provides written consent. Susan provided a number of scenarios of graduate students leaving UBC/losing interest without completing their work. The trickiest cases are when students are unhappy with the senior author finishing the work.

Discussion points were as follows:

- Beth asked what would happen if the issue arose with a colleague at another university. If her collaborator at McGill does not agree to go forward with a project they worked on jointly then that work will not be published. It should not be any different for a student.
- Curtis asked how often this issue arises and Max said FoGS is currently dealing with one such scenario. Susan said authorship seems to be a problem for the department that drafted the sample agreement.
- Beth said it's not unusual to have students leave/lose interest in their work in the case of professional programs; there is not as much push to publish.
- Curtis said the title of "senior author" may be confusing. Philip said there are disciplines in which it is a defined concept.
- Beth said she liked the example Susan provided from Queen's University. Susan said the problem with that particular agreement is that it is counter to UBC's Policy 85, which states students cannot be included as authors unless they have given consent. Beth said something has gone wrong if a student has not completed the work.
- Cindy suggested there could be a time limit for students to agree to be included as authors. Chris said imposing a time limit could negatively impact students who may wish to patent their work. Beth said this issue intersects with the problems that arise from electronic publication through cIRcle.
- Beth asked whose interests this policy serves. She said it is important to protect students' rights.
- Colum said the policy could disincentivize a student to finish their work; they could produce the data without writing up the results.
- Curtis said there should be a clear agreement on authorship and how it will be handled before students begin their research.
- Beth said there will not likely be a policy to address all situations.

- Chris said students may not understand what they are agreeing to with regards to authorship when they begin their graduate work. Tom and Curtis countered that authorship needs to be addressed at the beginning of the research relationship.
- Beth said the policy must be flexible enough to recognize a student's autonomy.

Action: Philip and Susan will collaborate to produce recommendations based on the Committee's comments.

b. Minimum Residency Requirement

Philip circulated proposed wording on the policy for doctoral students' residency requirements. The scope for a larger discussion is the relationship of a PhD student to UBC, and how that manifests itself.

Susan asked if the policy needs to be amended. Philip said there are issues with requiring students to be residents for two years "at the University;" the literal interpretation of this prepositional phrase is problematic. There are cases in which students may not technically be in residence at UBC but they would not be seen as breaching policy. Philip said the wording of the policy should be adjusted to reflect real life scenarios while still maintaining its original purpose.

The Committee will revisit the issue in the future.

c. Supplemental Examinations

There was not enough time to discuss item 'c' under New Business.

6. Proposed Agenda Items

Philip invited members to suggest agenda for future meetings, recommending plenty of advance notice so that the Committee can be adequately prepared for discussion.

Jenny said she will bring issues related to the joint PhD program and Co-Tutelle to the next meeting.

7. Adjournment

<i>All</i>	}	To adjourn the meeting.
------------	---	-------------------------

Carried.

8. Next meeting: May 7, 2013