

Meeting of the GC Policy Committee
Tuesday, February 28, 2012; 12:00 pm – 2:00 pm
Graduate Students Centre, Room 200

Present: Douglas Harris, Beth Haverkamp, Jessica Iverson (minutes), Philip Loewen (Chair), Jamie Paris, Jenny Phelps, Susan Porter, Max Read, Clive Roberts, Curtis Suttle

Guests: Taraneh Sowlati, Shelley Small, Rachel Wu

Regrets: Akram Alfantazi, Hugh Brock, Daniel Granot, Darrin Lehman, Peter Leung, Andrew Patterson, Cindy Prescott, Brent Skura, Kishor Wasan

1. Adoption of Agenda

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

2. Minutes of last meeting (January 17, 2012)

The minutes of January 17, 2012, will be provided on paper for approval at the next meeting of the GC Policy Committee on March 27, 2012.

3. Business arising

a. B Arch to M Arch degree name change

Philip reminded the group that this item is still on the back burner and that the committee is waiting for SALA to make the next move.

b. Parental Accommodation Policy

Philip said the handout that was distributed to the committee very closely resembles the version that was discussed at the last meeting. Most of the changes appear in the “Funding” section, which has been drastically truncated to reflect what FoGS actually controls. Students will naturally be interested in other sources of funding but it is not in FoGS’ purview to comment at the level of policy. With the committee’s support, Philip said he would like to put forward the academic portion of the policy for approval by Grad Council, and then by Senate, so that the policy appears in the UBC Calendar. Philip said that he removed the mention of funding from the introductory section of the policy. He also made the following changes to the wording of the “Funding” section:

- *Eligible students who are supported by a UBC scholarship or fellowship will experience no change in their ~~this~~ funding during the Accommodation Period.*

Philip informed the committee that he and Susan met with Dave Farrar, Louise Cowin and other University leaders to discuss parental leave and bursary support and they were enthusiastically in favour of doing something on the financial side to complement what is going on at the policy level. Before anything happens, however, people in leadership positions need more information.

The group was concerned at its last meeting about RA support, a category of funding where grant-holders supply money to their students. The question: What happens to the RA dollars for a grad student during the accommodation period? An earlier draft of the policy included a statement that FoGS expects RA support to continue, in the hopes of exerting moral pressure on supervisors to do the right thing, but this unenforceable statement was deemed inappropriate and removed. Susan added that compatibility of that expense with the rules of various granting agencies has yet to be confirmed.

Philip estimated it would cost approximately \$50,000/year to cover RAs for 8 weeks if there was no money coming from granting agencies and UBC had to find financial support for those in need of the accommodation. Not all RAs would require funding from the university, however. Susan said there are also issues around AAs and TAs; TAs theoretically have access but it is unclear at this point whether they have full access. Philip said that given potential complications at least the academic aspects of the policy can be implemented. Susan added that it is almost certain that the university can afford at least 8 weeks of financial support for RAs. The full-on parental leave bursary is the big-budget item, and Philip said members of the Provost Office are in favour of trying to make that work as well.

Discussion from the committee ensued. Key points to note are as follows:

- Jamie said the GSS had a conversation with senior UBC administration and they're estimating it would cost \$500,000 to fund the program. Susan clarified that amount is for 8 months of leave. Jamie said the only point of assurance he needs to take back to the graduate community is whether the Parental Accommodation Policy would create complications with other types of leaves. Philip assured him there are no compatibility problems between the two and Susan added that accommodation is distinct from leave.
- Doug supported the policy but asked for clarification on what "supported by a UBC scholarship or fellowship" means in Section V of handout? What is captured by this statement? Philip could not provide a clear answer immediately. Jenny suggested that it seems this section of the policy refers to whether or not students are UBC-funded, and if they are then their funding will not be disrupted. Susan said she would like to check with FoGS' Awards unit to check for stipulations on conditions of funding.
- Philip proposed the following change to the wording of the "Funding" section:
 - *Eligible students who are supported by a UBC-funded scholarship or fellowship...*

Philip moved to take document with above amendments to Graduate Council for approval and forwarding to Senate and entry into the Calendar. Taraneh seconded. All were in favour.

Loewen/Sowlati	}	<i>That the proposed Parental Accommodation Policy be approved for submission to Graduate Council.</i>
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Carried.

Further discussion on the topic from the committee followed:

- Jenny brought up the administrative implications of the policy and said she was hopeful it could be implemented for September 2012.
- Clive said it is encouraging to see UBC attempt to put together a bursary for parental leave as it would make it easier for researchers who have to find funding for grad students who start families.
- Shelley said she had discussed the prospect with Murray Isman, the Dean of Land and Food Systems, and he was very supportive. She also said that on a faculty level members do not necessarily like to be told what to do by FoGS but they do want guidance.

c. Leave of Absence

The proposed “Leave of Absence” Calendar entry includes the following categories: Parental Leave, Leave for Health Reasons, Creative/Professional Leave, Personal Leave. Philip pointed to the following text for the committee’s discussion:

- *The total duration of all leaves granted in a graduate program is normally limited to six academic terms (two years).*

The specific categories of leave were implied in the present Calendar entry but are explicitly spelled out in the proposed entry. Some of the categories have internal maximums.

At the last meeting Shelley was concerned that Personal Leave may be too broadly interpreted by students. The terminology in the proposed Calendar entry might help: it stipulates that the personal circumstances associated with a request for leave should “significantly interfere with the ability to pursue his or her program of study.”

Susan suggested that Creative/Professional Leave should just be called Professional Leave. It is unclear what is considered creative and what is considered professional. Jamie suggested changing the wording to eliminate the problem. He agreed with Susan’s suggestion of just calling it Professional Leave as leaving to take on a creative project is a type of professional leave.

For drafting purposes, the title of the category was changed to Professional Leave and the text amended as follows:

- *A graduate student who wishes to pause his or her program of study in order to undertake ~~creative or~~ professional work (**including creative work**) relevant to his or her academic work is eligible for ~~creative/professional~~ leave. ~~Creative/~~Professional leave is normally limited to 12 months.*

At the last meeting Jenny reported that with regard to medical leave, the current policy was limited to 12 months, however UBC Legal said that did not comply with human rights legislation as students with ongoing medical disabilities may require an accommodation that includes additional terms of leaves of absence. The text was updated and the title of the leave was changed from Medical Leave to Leave for Health Reasons. Further, the policy now states that students may be required to produce documentation from a clinician that they are fit to resume their studies. Susan asked if this is normal

practice and Jenny said it is not normally done but it is often recommended, especially with mental health issues.

Shelley asked that the last sentence of the Leave for Health Reasons Calendar entry be amended as follows:

- *Before being allowed to re-register, students returning to study after a leave for health reasons may be required to produce **specific** documentation from their clinician, confirming that they have recovered sufficiently to effectively resume their academic program.*

Shelley said the amended wording would ensure the proper type of documentation is submitted. Jenny agreed the word improved the sentence.

There were no changes to the Calendar entry for Parental Leave.

Philip then turned the conversation to lengths of leave, The proposed Calendar entry for leaves of absences states that the total duration of all leaves is normally limited to 2 years (6 academic terms). A discussion followed:

- Jamie asked for students who transition from MAs to PhDs, will the 2 years encompass their entire time at UBC? Often students don't terminate their MAs but transition directly into their PhDs. Jamie supported the 2 year maximum but wondered if 2 years of leave is appropriate for student in a 1 year program.
- Taraneh agreed with Jamie. She said 1 year would be suitable for MA students. Shelley reminded the committee that MA students actually have up to 5 years to complete their programs.
- In response to Jamie's earlier question, Jenny said when a student fast-tracks from MA to PhD it is considered one program from beginning to end, so the 2 year maximum would apply.
- The committee was in favour of changing the wording to a 1 and 2 year split between MA and PhD students with "normally" in both cases.
- Philip moved to take document with above amendments to Graduate Council for approval and forwarding to Senate and entry into the Calendar. Clive seconded.

Further discussion on leaves followed:

- Taraneh informed the committee that in her faculty (Forestry) there are currently 6 students on leave (2 on personal, 4 on parental). Of the faculty's total current students (approximately 460), 19 have taken leaves, including the 6 mentioned above. Of these 19 students, 11 took personal leaves and 8 took parental leaves. It is unclear whether any of the personal leaves were for health reasons.
- Clive said in the last 5 years 6 Dentistry students have taken leave, half of which were parental. This is from a total of approximately 100 students.
- Rachel said there are about 55 grad students in Pharmaceutical Sciences and in the last 2 years 2 have taken unofficial leave and 1 has taken official leave (but it was treated as an unofficial leave).

<i>Loewen/Roberts</i>	}	<i>That the proposed Calendar entry for Leave of Absence (as amended) be approved for submission to Graduate Council.</i>
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4. New Business

a. Thesis/dissertation online publication policy

Philip gave a brief overview of UBC's online publication policy for theses and dissertations. He noted there are many people who want to delay publicly disseminating their theses as the information may also be submitted to a scholarly journal that will not publish the work if it has already been made public. This is common in Chemistry.

An email from Chris Hives, UBC Archivist, was circulated to the committee. In it Chris wrote that he was not able to track the origins of the thesis embargo guidelines but provided a copy of instructions from 2000. It is unclear who owns the policy but FoGS has the authority to change it.

Curtis noted how quickly theses now become public—it takes much less time than it did in 2000 and they are now more readily accessible by the public. Susan said withholding a thesis may not only benefit the student in question but also the broader academic community. Philip said he is in favour of public release of theses as early as possible, considering these other desirable outcomes.

Max summarized her research into embargo times at other universities. One year is common, 2 years is the most common, and quite a number extend beyond 2 years. Permanent embargoes are not common in the current academic community. She noted UBC is on the conservative side with a normal 1-year maximum and an absolute maximum of 2 years.

With the current policy, when a "Delay Publication of a Thesis/Dissertation" form is submitted with a request for 6 months the request is granted. For times longer than 6 months justification is required. The form states the maximum delay is 12 months but Philip said it could be extended to 2 years. A discussion followed:

- Clive agreed with the argument that 2 years would be an adequate time to delay publishing a thesis. He suggested the delay form should be changed to 12 months to a maximum of 24 months.
- Curtis echoed Clive but would like 6, 12, 24 months and permanent as embargo durations. Permanent embargos may be applicable to theses that deal with topics such as pathogens and nuclear technology as it is possible that this kind of information should never be made public. Susan noted a permanent embargo would be extremely rare but Curtis said theses are not scrutinized in the same way as scientific journal articles, and a permanent embargo may be necessary. Someone suggested adding text to the existing "Thesis Approval Form" that the contents of the thesis are not dangerous as research supervisors already have to sign that form.
- Shelley asked in the cases where researchers and/or students are funded by NSERC scholarships whether or not NSERC expects to see a student's dissertation, or some other similar "result" of their studies. Max said the CIHR policy states that theses and dissertations have to be deposited into an electronic library or repository within 6 months of completion but they do not have to be fully open access.
- Philip noted there is scope for further discussion as embargo issues also exist in the Faculty of Arts but a Faculty representative was not present to provide commentary.

- Clive raised the issue of including copyrighted materials in theses and dissertations, and whether this may affect embargo durations. Philip said that the copyright on a thesis or dissertation as a whole belongs to the student who wrote it. In fact, the copyright on intellectual property generated by UBC students and faculty alike belongs to the individual author and not to the University. (Patents are a different issue.) If students include copyrighted information that belongs to someone else in their work then they must have permission from the owner of the copyright and this permission must be acknowledged by the student.

Committee consensus is that a 2-year maximum delay is reasonable. Max noted that the UBC Library said it might be technically possible to restrict access to theses only to people at UBC, although the Library indicated it is unlikely this would happen soon. Curtis did not see how this would give the author protection. Susan said many journal publishers would accept this sort of limited release; again, there are stricter rules governing work leading to patents.

Action: Committee members were asked to take the policy back to their respective faculties for review.

b. Manuscript-based theses

Philip started the discussion by noting that the report of the external review committee that recently visited FoGS does not agree with UBC's rules on manuscript-based theses.

Curtis said the most difficult aspect of dealing with manuscript-based theses stems from supervisory committees because the guidelines are not well structured so it is left to the bias of the committee. He has been on a number of committees with varying views on the issue.

Susan said the policy may only need to be adjusted slightly as the significant problem may be in the communication of the policy and not the policy itself. She did some research on other institutions (particularly those of the external reviewers) to see what their policies state:

- At the University of Calgary theses must have introductory and concluding chapters that explain how the constituent manuscripts fit together.
- At Dalhousie University a general introduction and comprehensive discussion are required, and sections linking manuscripts may be included as necessary.
- At McGill University theses must have connecting text to provide local bridges.
- Not a single American university Susan researched had any guidelines on manuscript-based theses.

Max said she looked at two European universities, Oxford University and the University of Oslo, and both gave instructions for content but not for organization.

Clive gave examples of a few Dutch manuscript-based theses. The theses are collections of published papers sandwiched between lengthy introductions and general conclusions with a discussion. He said these are models for manuscript-based theses but they are unlike what he has seen at UBC.

Curtis said it can be difficult to reorganize a collection of manuscripts into a cohesive thesis and that it is a waste of the student's time. Clive disagreed. Curtis said it is field-specific.

It was noted in the report on the external review of FoGS that external examiners were having trouble deciding what work had been done by the student and what had been done by co-authors in some theses. Susan mentioned that manuscript-based theses should include a preface outlining the student's specific contribution for each journal article, as is common practice. This is currently required in all theses that include collaborative work, including those in which the material has been re-written. She also said that it is possible the reviewers may have been unfamiliar with this type of thesis.

Taraneh said she is in favour of manuscript-based theses. It takes more time for students to change published articles into a cohesive dissertation.

Shelley said in the past students were confused by instructions for preparing manuscript-based theses. Susan suggested adding a sentence like, "Linking sections may be included as necessary," to current policy to clarify the format. Curtis supported Susan's comment. He suggested the policy state that UBC accepts manuscript-based theses with an introduction that explains how the chapters are linked.

Clive said the policy is clear and it comes down to supervisory committees being diligent in reviewing theses before they are sent to external examiners. Philip agreed the policy is clear but acknowledged that it may not be clearly compatible with a manuscript-based presentation.

Curtis said an integrated bibliography and supplementary materials need to be considered. How will they be included in manuscript-based theses?

c. Rolling Graduation

Philip summarized what was passed at last month's Senate meeting. MA and PhD students can now have their degrees conferred at any regular meeting of the Senate, thereby graduating sooner in some cases. Now the question is how the candidates for graduation will be identified to Senate—this traditionally requires the endorsement of the full Faculty of Graduate Studies, which now meets only twice per year.

Max met with members from Enrolment Services and two clerks from FoGS, all of whom are responsible for graduation. They are trying to come up with a schedule for Grad Council meetings that will make it possible to have 4 graduations a year. (There will still be only 2 ceremonies.) Right now it is unknown whether the full Faculty of Graduate Studies is willing to delegate its responsibility to Grad Council to approve graduations or whether the full Faculty is willing to meet four times a year.

Curtis asked if students graduating off-cycle will still be able to attend a ceremony and Philip confirmed they would.

Beth asked if students can be contingently approved to graduate but that is not allowed. The graduation procedure will remain unchanged for the most part.

Susan asked why graduation has been limited to 4 times a year and Max said it is because of Grad Council. If Grad Council were removed from the equation then theoretically it could happen more often, although that would pose administrative problems at FoGS as it is more efficient administratively to handle graduations in batches. Furthermore, it is cost-effective for Enrolment Services to print parchments only twice a year, but four times a year may be feasible.

Beth asked if students will have to apply for off-cycle graduation. Max confirmed it would be the same process but that they would also have to apply to participate in the graduation ceremony.

5. New Business

d. Graduate Council

e. Comprehensive Exams

There was not enough time to discuss these agenda items.

6. Adjournment of the meeting

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

7. Next meeting: March 27, 2012