

**Meeting of the GC Policy Committee**  
Tuesday, March 27, 2012; 12:00 pm – 2:00 pm  
University Centre Lower Level, Room 172

**Present:** Douglas Harris, Beth Haverkamp, Darrin Lehman, Peter Leung, Philip Loewen (Chair), Jamie Paris, Jenny Phelps, Susan Porter, Andrew Patterson, Lisa Pountney (minutes), Max Read, Curtis Suttle

**Guests:** Shelley Small, Taraneh Sowlati, Rachel Wu

**Regrets:** Akram Alfantazi, Daniel Granot, Cindy Prescott, Clive Roberts, Brent Skura, Kishor Wasan

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**1. Adoption of Agenda**

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

**2. Minutes of last two meetings (January 17, 2012, February 28, 2012)**

<i>All</i>	}	<i>That the minutes of the January 12, 2012 and February 28, 2012 meetings be approved.</i>
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*Carried.*

**3. Business arising**

**a. Embargo period for theses**

Philip reminded the group that at the last meeting committee members were asked to take both the embargo period and manuscript-based theses topics back to their respective faculties for review, and that feedback will pave the way for today's discussion.

Philip reported that the Faculty of Graduate Studies met with interested parties with regard to the online publication policy. To summarize this discussion, Chemistry would be happy if the maximum withhold time were two years, however Arts would like to see a 5 year maximum embargo duration.

Philip commented that there is more work to do, and consultations have to continue. Philip is also a member of the Scholarly Communication Steering Committee, and is trying to get the theses embargo topic on the radar of this group, as we might need the help of this committee.

Philip then asked the Policy Committee for any thoughts or feedback:

- Curtis commented that he would raise the topic at the Faculty of Science Heads' meeting.
- Beth had not formally asked Education, but likes the idea of taking it to the Scholarly Communication Steering Committee, and believes this is the correct group to be consulting on this matter.
- Jenny asked if the new time periods would be the *de facto* period, or could a program request a certain amount of time up to two years or up to five years. Philip responded that we are still at the defining stage and so it would be premature to give a definite answer. The plan is that these would be the maximum, but it's still very early days and there should be flexibility.
- Curtis suggested that perhaps there should be an option to have sections of theses redacted in situations where the research should not be made public (chemicals, weapons development, etc.). Philip will take this to the Scholarly Communication Steering Committee as well.

Philip hopes that at the next meeting he might have more to say on this topic.

#### **b. Manuscript-based theses**

Philip commented that this item hasn't been advanced very much, and hopes to have some text for the group to review at the next meeting.

#### **c. Policies regarding Parental Accommodation and Leave**

Philip provided an update on the Senate Policy Committee's reception of the parental accommodation policy and the leave of absence policy (as approved at the last meeting of this committee). The Senate committee would like to make minor edits to both policies, but is generally in favour of both initiatives and as such the two policies should be presented for approval at the Senate meeting in May.

Jenny asked (if the policies are passed at Senate) if it would be possible to recommend an 'effective from' date in order to allow us to make the necessary changes to our systems? We're somewhat reliant on Enrolment Services to see if they can make changes to SISC.

Philip said there is an effective date and he will work with the Senate secretariat to come up with the policy format, including a start date.

Jenny will investigate how long it will take to change the required systems and will communicate a suitable date to Philip.

### **4. New Business**

#### **a. Doc Exams Practice: External Examiner identity release**

Philip commented that this item is more for the committee's information, rather than for voting, but welcomes any feedback.

Philip reminded the committee that we have been working on the doctoral exam procedures, and part of that process has been developing a new nomination form for external examiners (XX's). Philip outlined the proposed changes to the standard practice in Doc Exams:

- When the Doc Exams group sends an email to invite an XX, a related email will go to the research supervisor inviting the supervisor to supply the XX nominee with relevant information to help the nominee make a decision.
- After a willing XX has been identified and the final copy of the dissertation has been received by FoGS, the identity of the XX will be released to the student (as well as to the supervisor and the Grad Program Assistant).
- Our correspondence with the XX and the student will include a strict and explicit prohibition on any communication between these two. (Existing rules governing supervisor-XX contact remain in force.)
- The online template that students use to fill in their Examination Programme will be modified so that students can enter the name of the External Examiner themselves.

There was discussion from the committee on the following points:

- The steps involved in inviting the external examiner
- Who should be told the external examiner's name, and when? For example, should the student be told? Currently some supervisors tell the student and some don't.
- The impact of telling the student the name of the external examiner was discussed at length.
- Should we give the student an option to decide whether or not to be informed about his/her external examiner?

After lengthy discussion, the changes, including releasing the identity of the external examiner to the student, were endorsed by the committee.

Philip informed the committee that the Doctoral External Examiners' Transport Fund is still available and provides matching travel support to offset the external examiner's transportation costs to and from the UBC to a maximum of \$500 for travel within North America and \$1,000 for travel from outside of North America. This document can be found at: <http://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/final-doctoral-exam/external-examiners-attendance-oral-defence>

#### **b. Doctoral-to-master's transfers**

Philip referred to the corresponding handout which outlined the current UBC policy on the transfer from doctoral to master's programs, and also included a table containing the policies from a number of other Canadian universities on this issue.

The use of certain wording in our text on transferring from a doctoral to a master's program has drawn some attention: "*Such transfers must not be used as consolations for failing performance at the doctoral level.*" This has recently been removed, but it has sparked a debate over whether allowing

students to transfer from a doctoral to a master's program diminishes the academic integrity of the master's program.

There was lengthy discussion, with many different examples raised. Points to note are as follows:

- Susan provided several scenarios in which this particular transfer could be a reasonable course of action. In cases where a student's personal life situation, goals or circumstances change, such a move could be the most logical step.
- There was general consensus that it needs to be in the student's best interest.
- Could it taint the master's degree if a student fails at the PhD level, but still obtains a master's?
- Most agreed that it shouldn't be a consolation prize – you shouldn't be awarded a master's automatically if you fail a PhD.
- Some thought that there should be a time frame in which a student was allowed to transfer.
- The transfer is not automatic – there would have to be a rationale, the student would have to be admissible, and the program would have to approve it.
- If a student has done work that qualifies for a master's, then shouldn't he/she be eligible?
- Funding is an issue with students transferring.
- Could be a supervisory problem as much as a student problem – this could be an easy out for supervisors if they don't want to offer any more support.
- Under the right circumstances, we want to be able to give students a way out the door and something to show for their hard work.
- Students should write their own requests for transfers.
- Could students perform some token course work to complete the master's if they've dropped down from a PhD?
- Lengthy discussion around timelines for transferring and whether they should be enforced.

Philip is hopeful that we can develop a proposal/policy which we can discuss and vote on at the next meeting.

There was not enough time to discuss the following two agenda items:

**c. Rolling Graduation**

**d. Graduate Council**

**5. Adjournment of the meeting**

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

**6. Next meeting:** May 8, 2012