

Meeting of the GC Policy Committee

Tuesday, May 7, 2013; 12:30 pm – 1:50 pm

Graduate Student Centre, Room 200

Present: Colum Connolly, Beth Haverkamp, Philip Loewen (Chair), Jenny Phelps, Cindy Prescott, Max Read, Michael Richards, Clive Roberts, Curtis Suttle, Marina von Keyserlingk, Jessica Iverson (minutes)

Guests: Katherine Beaumont, Janet Teasdale, Rachel Wu (for Kishor Wasan)

Regrets: Daniel Granot, Susan Porter, Chris Roach

Absent: Akram Alfantazi, Douglas Harris, Peter Leung, Kishor Wasan, Daniel Weary

1. Adoption of Agenda

All } *That the agenda be approved.*

Carried.

2. Minutes of Last Meeting (April 2, 2013)

All } *That the minutes of the meeting held April 2, 2013 be approved.*

Carried.

3. Chair's Remarks

The Chair had no remarks.

4. Business Arising/Updates

a. Visiting International Research Students (VIRS)

Philip reminded the committee that many issues were raised when this item was discussed at the last meeting; the high cost of the proposal was of particular concern.

Jenny said an earlier version of the VIRS proposal that the committee reviewed last Fall has changed with regards to the associated fees, especially mandatory student fees. She reiterated that at

the last meeting members expressed their concerns about increases in the cost of the proposal; many felt fees have a chilling effect on student mobility. Members also said that graduate students in particular are often viewed as scholars as opposed to students, and thus questioned whether or not it makes sense to charge mandatory student fees. Jenny took the committee's feedback to the group working on the proposal.

Jenny circulated a copy of the proposal as it currently stands, noting there are still some issues up for discussion. The document included a rationale for why the University needs a mechanism for tracking visiting students and for providing services to the graduate programs that welcome these students. She asked that the committee focus on the fee portion of the proposal.

The document outlines the different components of the fee. The foundational fee is called the Visiting International Research Student Fee, and it applies to both graduate and undergraduate students. The fee is an amalgamation of two fees: one is a fee equivalent to one credit of tuition; the other is the existing Go Global fee that is charged to all students going on exchange.

The fees associated with one credit of tuition are meant to cover University expenses like use of IT services, the library, international student development, counselling and health services. Earlier in the development process the working group consulted with the Strategic & Decision Support office. SDS conducted a cost analysis and suggested a fee the University should seek to compensate for services provided. Their suggestion was higher than the cost of one credit of tuition, but the working group thought one credit of tuition would be an ideal starting point as the fee is already established. The Go Global fee is meant to cover the costs of administering the program. The VIRS fee amalgamates the cost of one credit of tuition with the existing Go Global fee into one overall fee that would be prorated by term.

Jenny said there are additional mandatory fees associated with status as a student at the University. Those fees include iMed insurance coverage for international students (Jenny noted there may be a way to opt out of iMed), AMS/GSS-related costs, and other University-related student fees. Jenny said the working group has been investigating whether or not the AMS/GSS fees can be eliminated, or if the program can be structured in such a way that those fees are not automatically triggered. When a student doesn't pay tuition to the University they are not required to pay the AMS/GSS fees. If the VIRS fee is not seen as tuition then it is probable the fees can be avoided.

Discussion points were as follows:

- Nina asked if the fees associated with one credit of tuition will be problematic if the plan is to ensure the VIRS fee is not seen as tuition. Jenny said that is one question the working group is addressing: can the amount be charged to students without calling it a tuition fee?
- Curtis asked how Continuing Education works, and if it would be an appropriate vehicle to collect the fees that are required.
- Jenny said an important question is whether visiting students should have access to student services.

- Nina asked what it means to be “on campus” for visiting students. What about the student who comes to UBC to work with someone from Zoology and spends the entire time in Alaska? Where do those students fit? She is concerned about locking in a policy and then looking for exemptions. Transparency is key.
- Jenny said there is broad agreement that it is fair for the University to want a centralized way to track visiting students and she appreciates that there are already some programs that do so very well. Nina said she understands the desire to track students, but doing so should not be detracting.
- Rachel provided comments on behalf of Tom Chang. The Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences discussed the VIRS a couple of months ago. The Faculty thinks the intention of the program is good; however in reality it is not very feasible. If the program proceeds, the Faculty thinks students should be able to opt out of some fees (health insurance, AMS) and that the fee schedule should be flexible (payable on a monthly basis).
- Nina said from her Faculty’s experience, the University must be very careful if it will allow visiting students to arrange for medical insurance from their homes. The University must protect itself in the event that a student’s own coverage is not sufficient. Katherine said students must also be protected and properly cared for, if needed.
- Jenny asked to establish where the committee has consensus. The committee agreed that students must have medical coverage and that the University has an obligation to the students to ensure their coverage is adequate for their visits. iMed is the established way to cover students for their first three months in the program. The AMS/GSS insurance plan only works if the student is also covered by MSP; it is an extended health plan.
- Katherine explained the advantage of considering iMed as the basis for medical coverage. The current iMed opt-out policy says that if a student is covered by a mandatory policy from their home institution, or the UBC sponsor, they can opt out of the coverage. The University can then ask iMed to assess the student’s policy to see whether or not it is equivalent to iMed’s coverage.
- Janet said the only fee the University bills directly is for the three-month waiting period, although students could avoid that fee if they had their own medical coverage. She noted that students covered by MSP are not tracked by either the government or the University, while iMed would provide coverage immediately on arrival in BC. Janet also noted that students covered by their own policies may not have access to the same services they would if covered by iMed.
- Jenny said iMed cannot be prorated by month; the cost is \$150 for three months.
- Colum said when he was an international student he had to prove he had insurance when he landed in Canada. Katherine said iMed insurance accounts for some travel time.
- Jenny said the other area in which she thinks there is consensus is that it is reasonable for the University to charge some sort of fee to provide for central administration of the VIRS pathway and the things associated with it, such as providing information, registering students and access to transcripts. The established fee that makes the most sense in this regard is the Go Global fee.

- Beth said it may be useful to consider the financial context in which this project is being developed. She said it is reasonable to charge a fee to visiting students; however the fee should not prevent students from coming to the University. From a policy perspective, Beth thinks the University should make a commitment to students from developing countries who cannot afford the fee; these students will otherwise be excluded from the academic community.
- Cindy thinks a fee should be charged that is in line with the services provided. Every student should have access to the library and the associated IT support that comes with that access.
- Jenny said the Go Global fee is convenient because it is established and would not require approval from the Board of Governors. The other part of the VIRS fee is the one credit of tuition, which could possibly be reduced. There are also mandatory student fees to consider, but Jenny said it may be possible to avoid those costs if the VIRS fee is framed as something other than tuition.
- Curtis said the original point of the project was to recognize UBC as an international institution, and to properly recognize and track the people that visit the University for research purposes. In the early stages of development it seemed logical to call these visitors “students” to track them while here, but the push to do so may have complicated matters, as is the case with the fees. He asked if there is another way to track students so that the original goals of this project are maintained. Katherine said that if visitors are not considered students then the University will have to determine their status, which may be more complex than finding a way to have a non-tuition-based student, which would eliminate mandatory student fees.
- Philip said he is enthusiastic about making the program zero-tuition and eliminating mandatory student fees. He said the VIRS form the working group is developing attempts to determine what exactly students want to take home from their time at UBC (like a transcript) although he anticipates some students will be confused. He said everyone should have access to transcripts by default.
- Michael said that if a VIRS fee were charged to his students, it would chill research opportunities.
- Clive suggested adding a line to the VIRS form asking if students will be located at the UBC Vancouver campus.
- Nina said she sees merit in the University trying to track this realized success but asked what exactly the Go Global fee covers. Students visit UBC for specific reasons and want proof they were here. She said to incorporate whatever the costs will be into one Go Global fee.
- Beth said she was struck by how strongly the committee feels about the fees associated with the project; nobody wants them to become problematic. She also said she has started thinking about the other associated costs, such as plane tickets and rent. She asked what the tipping point is when students stop coming to UBC. Beth said a VIRS fee may have a chilling effect on student mobility, but so would the overall cost of staying in Vancouver for an extended period of time. Jenny said that based on past discussions the tipping point is around \$500 per visit.

- Clive asked if UBC could engage in reciprocal relationships with other universities via Go Global. Katherine said yes, but the challenge is it is unclear which activities students will undertake. Clive asked if the fee could be uncoupled from registration; money would not change hands but students would be tracked. Philip said that option may be viable once the project has a basic structure.
- Philip said the Universitas 21 team is currently on campus and earlier in the day had discussed fees for visiting students. Some universities ask for fees, many others noted the issue fees pose: compliance. Katherine said UBC already has a reciprocal relationship with the other U21 institutions.
- Nina said the fee should be low enough that it would not detract students from visiting. A small fee is reasonable and people will likely comply. Jenny said she thinks the VIRS policy is at that point.
- Nina and Philip said there should be a one-time fee regardless of the length of the visit, up to one year. Clive said there should be a low threshold before students are required to pay a fee. Philip clarified that students are not required to pay for the first month of their visits.
- Jenny said the VIRS fee will be the existing Go Global fee (regardless of the length of the visit, up to one year) with iMed as the default medical insurance (although students could potentially opt out if they can demonstrate they already have adequate coverage). There was a general consensus among the committee that this was an appropriate fee.
- Curtis thanked Katherine, Janet and Jenny for their hard work on the proposal and noted that the VIRS fee is more complicated than the committee originally imagined.

Action: Jenny and Philip will present the VIRS proposal to the executive sponsor group.

b. Authorship agreements

The committee did not discuss item ‘b’ under Business Arising/Updates.

c. Minimum residency requirement

Philip reminded the committee that this item was raised by the Faculty of Law; the Faculty has received inquiries from potential applicants who are interested in pursuing a Ph.D., however those people would not be based in Vancouver. He said there is value in having doctoral students on campus. He then provided examples of cases the University may be faced with in the absence of a clear policy.

Curtis said the requirement sounds like a rule that could be enforced if needed, but otherwise ignored. He has had students spend long stints in the field or in foreign laboratories. He also noted the Co-Tutelle aspect that was raised at an earlier meeting.

The discussion turned toward students’ supervisory committees. Philip said there is merit in working under the supervision of UBC faculty, regardless of where a student is situated. He said he

wants to be assured that UBC faculty members have had strong roles in informing their students. Curtis said some of his students conduct their research off-site under the supervision of adjunct professors. These students have co-supervisors, and Clive noted that the majority of their supervisory committee would be members of FoGS. Clive said students could work off campus and still achieve candidacy; the current policy allows for that.

Nina clarified that adjunct professors are not members of FoGS, which is why the supervisory committee must be a significant part of a doctoral student's program. She then asked if the current policy for Ph.D. programs isn't already that they must be full-time. She said it's the function of the student's supervisory committee to ensure a student is adequately prepared to succeed at the candidacy level.

Beth agreed with Curtis that it is useful to have a policy that can be enforced when needed, but she said President Toope supports flexible learning, and that has started to impact graduate programs. She said the key issue is determining what makes something a UBC degree. The level of involvement from FoGS members is one aspect. She said perhaps the notion of a residency requirement has become outdated, and in a flexible learning environment it is important to distinguish what makes a degree uniquely UBC. She can accept the policy as it has been proposed, but she thinks a larger conversation is required.

Cindy said it is more about the level of interaction students have with UBC faculty than it is about where those students are situated. The troubles she has encountered stem from lack of interaction and academic oversight. Nina said this is why she would like clarity on the role of adjunct professors.

Curtis said there are institutions internationally where graduate students complete their research. These institutions are not universities, but there will be people who have adjunct status at universities, so students may never step foot on their campuses. He does not think it is the best model, but it highlights the importance of the supervisory committee and how involved the committee is in the research.

Philip agreed with Beth and Cindy. He said it's not actually about where someone lives, but rather how much influence UBC has—as an institution and through its people—on the intellectual and research formation of students. Some of that comes from being physically located on campus. Cindy said the students that are immersed in the University community are the ones that will succeed.

Action: Philip will revise the proposal so that it reflects the philosophical intent of the policy.

d. Supplemental examinations: why are these prohibited?

There was not enough time to discuss item 'd' under Business Arising/Updates.

5. New Business

a. SCARP PhDs teaching master's courses

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

b. Continuous registration

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

6. Proposed Agenda Items

Nina said she would like to discuss adjunct faculty and what they are and are not permitted to do at the University.

7. Adjournment

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

8. Next meeting: TBD