

Meeting of the GC Academic Policy Committee

Wednesday, October 9, 2013; 12:30 pm – 1:50 pm

Graduate Student Centre, Room 200

Present: Beth Haverkamp, Peter Leung, Jenny Phelps, Susan Porter, Max Read, Clive Roberts, Larry Walker (Chair), Jessica Iverson (minutes)

Guests: Brian Cairns (for Kishor Wasan)

Regrets: Brian Bemmels, Douglas Harris, Gail Murphy, Michael Richards, Kishor Wasan

Absent: Akram Alfantazi, Colúm Connolly, Cindy Prescott, Daniel Weary, Marina von Keyserlingk

1. Introductions and regrets

2. Adoption of the agenda

All } *That the agenda be approved.*

Carried.

3. Minutes of the last meeting (May 7, 2013)

All } *That the minutes of the meeting held May 7, 2013 be approved.*

Carried.

4. Chair's remarks

As the new committee chair, Larry said he will try to be respectful of members' time and commitment to the committee. He would like to start and stop meetings on time. During discussions he asked that members maintain order as full conversations are important.

Larry said one of the big learning curves he has encountered since taking on his new role is responding to the diversity of the campus. While committee members are encouraged to represent their faculties, they share the common purpose of trying to advance graduate studies at UBC, and thus may need to put own interests aside and think more collaboratively at times.

Larry acknowledged the support staff at Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies for their knowledge, conscientiousness, carefulness and caring. He said he recognizes that the sentiment across campus is

often that G+PS staff are seen as having a policing role, but they are truly working hard to make things better for graduate students and graduate education.

Larry updated the committee on doctoral exams. There were 183 exams scheduled during the summer session, including the August blackout period. This number is higher than previous years. There were five negative external examiner reports, so those exams have been postponed. Larry noted that in his limited experience it seems that interdisciplinarity can sometimes be problematic if the external examiners are not appropriately chosen. In terms of the exams themselves, 89% were pass with no or minor revisions, 10% were pass with substantial revisions and 1% were unsatisfactory and require re-examination.

5. From May 2013: Business arising/updates

a. Visiting International Research Students (VIRS)

Jenny provided an update. She said that, fundamentally, the University is interested in establishing a somewhat formalized pathway to recognize research students from other universities, especially from international ones, who come to UBC for a short period of time to conduct research, not to take any courses. Jenny has worked with groups across campus (Office of the Provost; Go Global; Office of the Vice President, Students) to determine an appropriate method for tracking this activity, and to determine the suitable status at the University for these individuals so that they may obtain proper documentation for being in Canada. There has been considerable discussion about whether or not there should be a fee associated with this status. An executive sponsor group (comprised of Susan Porter, Helen Burt, Anna Kindler and Janet Teasdale) was established to govern discussions concerning the VIRS. Jenny said there is now a proposal that has been accepted by the executive sponsor group as well as by the executives of the University. In a way, it is not really a new policy, but rather a new status for students at the University, with an associated fee schedule. The proposal was expanded to include both undergraduate and graduate students who come to UBC as visiting researchers.

Jenny noted some highlights of the proposal:

- Individuals will not have student status at the University (i.e., no assigned student number) but will have status called Visiting International Research Student.
- A fee has been established to recoup the basic administrative costs of providing a pathway for visiting researchers and for tracking those individuals. The fee that was settled on is \$384.25, which is the current Go Global fee.
- The Go Global office will be the administrative office, assuming the proposal is accepted. Go Global will manage the VIRS process. The fee is also a close reflection of the assessed cost of providing the new services. The fee supports the administrative infrastructure of the pathway, not the research infrastructure (i.e., does not provide funding for research).
- The fee is the same whether a student visits for one month or 12 months, as the administrative costs do not differ. It is not prorated; it is a one-time fee that covers one year of staying as visitor. Visitors of less than one month are not expected to pay the fee.
- Additionally, visitors will be required to pay the iMed student insurance fee as international students, which is beneficial as it ensures they will have medical coverage for

at least the first three months of their stay. This fee can be prorated if they are here for less than 3 months.

- Visitors will not be charged tuition and therefore will not be required to pay other mandatory student fees.

Jenny said the proposal is going to the Senate Academic Policy Committee for their review. That committee will need to approve the associated Calendar entry. From there, the proposal will be forwarded to Senate for approval. The fee structure itself will go to the Board of Governors for approval. Jenny said the entire process will likely take a minimum of six months.

Discussion points were as follows:

- Susan said the committee had a significant influence on determining the fee and keeping it low. Jenny said the original proposed fee was close to \$1,200.
- Peter asked what affect the VIRS has on Visiting Scholars. Jenny said the expectation is that the Visiting Scholar pathway in Faculty Relations will no longer be used for somebody who is a student at another university. The Visiting Scholar status through Faculty Relations will remain for visiting scholars who are not students. The purpose of the VIRS pathway is to advance the academic progress of those individuals.
- Beth asked if visitors will have access to the library. Jenny said yes.
- Brian asked for the cost of iMed health insurance. Jenny said \$150, and Susan clarified visitors will not have to pay if they have their own coverage. Jenny said visitors themselves can opt-out of iMed if they can demonstrate their own coverage is adequate.

b. Authorship agreements

The issue of authorship agreements was last discussed at the April meeting. Larry said he has been researching the topic and discovered Policy 85 (Scholarly Integrity) addresses some issues of authorship. He also found four documents on the G+PS website that address authorship issues between supervisors and graduate students: 1. suggested [welcome letter](#) from supervisor to student; 2. [expectations document](#); 3. [Intellectual Property Guide](#); 4. [Graduate Student-Supervisor Agreement form](#). He said through in-house discussions he has come to the conclusion that it would be near impossible to develop an ironclad statement G+PS could impose. The current documents and resources provide enough incentive for supervisors and students to discuss authorship, and as such, Larry does not wish to advance this issue any further.

Discussion points were as follows:

- Beth asked if the different documents were consistent. Larry said he thinks they represent different attempts over time to clarify the issue, but he found no inconsistencies.
- Susan said the point is that authorship should be discussed upfront.

c. Minimum residency requirement

The issue of a minimum residency requirement was discussed at the April and May meetings but was not resolved. The issue at hand is whether or not the current policy needs to change. Larry circulated a draft copy of a proposed Calendar entry. He advised the committee there are no proposed changes with regards to master's students, only doctoral. Larry said he has an issue with the draft proposal because it implies that after two years doctoral students are not required to be full-time, however all UBC doctoral students are considered full-time. He also said he thinks the proposed wording "whichever comes first" should be "whichever comes last," as it relates to normal doctoral student residency expectations. Past discussions about this requirement have focused on what it means to get a UBC degree. Supervision by UBC faculty is seen as a key component.

Discussion points were as follows:

- Susan said limiting "in residence" to the Vancouver area poses an issue as she could think of instances in which students would be living in Victoria or Prince George.
- Beth asked if the policy would support global partnerships by accommodating opportunities for students to study abroad.
- Clive asked if "sanctioned, off-campus, full-time study" could be added to the policy. Susan noted such an exception can be made with the approval of the Dean.
- Jenny said the point of the policy is to keep control in University's hands. Students ask why they are not permitted to come from out of town to attend classes, and the policy states that approval must be granted in order for them to do so.
- Susan asked whether the policy is sufficient as it currently stands.
- Brian asked what the original intention of the policy was. His Faculty offers three-year joint PhD programs with international institutions, so those students would not fulfil the UBC residency requirement.
- Beth said her Faculty has used the current policy to discourage out-of-town students who want to study at UBC but only on a drop-in basis.
- Peter asked how the policy impacts the Flexible Learning Initiative, an approach President Toope supports. Susan said she does not think the initiative applies to PhD students. Brian said the policy could be seen as being inflexible.
- Jenny asked if having no residency requirement puts the University in a position to accommodate students who do not want to come to Vancouver. Beth said it helps to have a policy in place in the event students challenge admission decisions.
- Beth said the applicability of the residency requirement may depend on the structure of a program, and Larry said the current policy already covers such cases.
- Jenny noted that the current policy appears in a section of the Calendar titled Duration of Program, and asked if the placement made sense. She said she thinks more helpful information could go in that section. She said the residency requirement should be a separate item. It would not occur to her to look under Duration of Program for information on residency. Susan asked if the Calendar section heading could change. Max said it may be possible and suggested Residency Requirements and Program Duration.
- Jenny said the policy must be amended because it contradicts the policy on joint PhD programs. Susan clarified that she authorizes joint programs of study, thereby granting an exception to the current residency policy.

Action: Max will look into whether or not the Calendar section entitled “Duration of Program” can be re-named “Residency Requirements and Program Duration”.

d. Prohibition on supplemental examinations in graduate programs ([Supplemental Examination Policy](#) from UBC Calendar)

This issue arose with regards to course-based master’s programs. In general, supplemental exams are prohibited at the graduate level. Supplemental exams are those that are rewritten in an attempt to obtain a higher grade. They are not common across campus. Larry said it is important to consider how student progress is evaluated if they are allowed to take supplemental exams. Currently, graduate students can repeat a course if they get a grade that is lower than 65%. Both grades appear on the transcript but only the higher grade is counted. In searching the Calendar Larry discovered most faculties do not address supplemental exams, although some of the larger ones (Arts, Science) prohibit them altogether. Certain conditions must be met for other units to allow them.

Discussion points were as follows:

- Susan asked if the marks for both exams are entered into SISC. Brian confirmed they are, and the higher grade is noted as supplemental. Susan said that is an honest way of presenting the information.
- Beth asked if the second mark is used for calculating GPAs. Larry clarified the supplemental mark would likely only be used for promotion purposes (i.e., fast-tracking to a PhD program).
- Beth said she suspects supplemental exams are being allowed in her Faculty. Clarity and consistency would benefit students and faculty members alike.
- Susan asked if anyone had any philosophical objections to the policy. Larry said in some disciplines professional skills are required, and exams are one method for assessing whether or not students have met those requirements.
- Clive said he was not aware of the prohibition. In his Faculty students cannot progress throughout their programs if they have not met basic competencies, so supplemental exams are important and needed. It seems reasonable that a student’s academic record reflect supplemental exams, but a prohibition could otherwise negatively impact some programs.
- Beth noted that students can only retake a comprehensive exam once if unsuccessful in the first attempt. After two failures students will normally be asked to leave the program.
- Larry asked if the policy should be restricted to course-based master’s programs. There was no consensus among the committee.
- Beth said exams serve a variety of purposes depending on the graduate program. She asked what the policy is trying to achieve.
- Susan said the policy must remain focused on exams in particular.
- Clive proposed reopening the issue, as some graduate programs require supplemental exams.

Action: Larry will continue working on a policy that addresses supplemental examinations in graduate programs.

6. New Business

a. Continuous registration policy

This issue also arose with regards to course-based master's programs. Currently, graduate students must be registered continuously (3 terms) throughout the year. Government funding policy is based on continuous enrollment. Larry cautioned that any changes made to the current policy will have large institutional effects on the University and the provincial government. For example, much of UBC's statistics (like times to completion) are based on continuous enrollment. Larry said he knows G+PS and many graduate programs become frustrated when students forget to register in their thesis courses, although there is now a policy in place that allows for rolling registration in thesis courses. He said this policy has helped dramatically.

Larry also said that abolishing a continuous registration policy could affect international students. Moreover, UBC would need to create a new tuition model for programs that do not require continuous registration. Scholarship-holders, fellowships, bursaries and loans could also be jeopardized as a result of changes to the existing policy. The thought of changing the policy was met with resistance at G+PS.

Larry said the push to amend the current policy is largely coming from professional programs in which students take courses on a part-time basis. It seems unfair to charge these students tuition when they are not taking any courses (because they are working). Larry said the current professional leave of absence policy is already in place to cover cases in which professionals move from their studies back to their work life. Susan added that the professional programs advocating for the change want their students to have the ability to build up credits toward a degree, course-by-course.

Larry discovered three UBC graduate programs in which students pay by credit: Master of Education Technology, Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing, Master of Rehabilitation Science. All are considered professional programs and all are offered online. Each program has a different tuition model. Beth said the Master of Education Technology is set-up as a cost-recovery program, so the entire tuition structure is different. She said there are differences between tuition schedules and continuous registration, but each has implications for the other. Brian asked whether faculties could administer their own graduate programs that do not adhere to G+PS's continuous registration policy. Susan said she does not think the University is interested in further decentralizing its graduate studies.

Jenny said she is a proponent of professional graduate programs exploring per-credit tuition arrangements—it makes sense to students—but she is not fully aware of the risks or issues the fee schedule imposes. Max clarified that fees are approved by the Board of Governors but do not fall with the curriculum committee's mandate (i.e., not reviewed as part of a new program proposal).

Beth said her Faculty has developed a platform for online programs, and the numbers are growing. She said other units across campus are interested in what they are offering. More and more programs have expressed interest in offering blended instruction programs (some on

campus, some online) which has started to create problems from a tuition perspective. Beth said registration and tuition may be a bigger issue for the University to address, and some of these broader questions should be answered before the committee begins devoting a lot of time to the matter.

With regards to structuring and implementing new programs, Jessica said questions and decisions about fees are handled so separately from the curriculum approval process that it may not be until a new program is set up at G+PS that fee-related issues arise. This can be frustrating, as fee arrangements could potentially influence a program's structure. Beth said if the President is making flexible learning a priority then someone needs to assess the policies and processes that will be impacted by moving away from traditional models.

Jenny said there are some programs that always require continuous registration, such as PhD and research-based master's programs, but others could apply for a type of status that does not carry the same policy. She said there should be different categories of programs as they relate to continuous registration.

Further discussion and reflection is required.

**b. Leave of Absence form (to reflect [Senate Policy V-302.1](#))
exceptions to the prohibition on using university facilities or resources while on leave**

Copies of the revised G+PS Leave of Absence form were circulated. The form includes Senate-approved leave of absence policies that the committee initiated last spring. The form itself provides a lot of information. Students must now sign the form but did not have to for previous versions.

Larry explained that the policy prohibits students from using University facilities or resources, or undertaking academic research, while on leave. Last October the committee discussed an exception to the policy—allowing students to retain library privileges. The committee approved the exception but it was not included in the broader policy, and therefore not reflected in Calendar. It is, however, noted on the G+PS form and website. Students can retain their library privileges because the libraries cannot distinguish different types of leave.

Larry said another issue that has arisen relates to whether or not this policy prohibits students from applying for fellowships while on leave. Technically, they are using UBC resources because their applications are processed and adjudicated. Larry said he does not want to create an exception to the policy for each possible case, nor does he want a student to not make a fellowship application to support their doctoral studies just because they are on leave. Brendan Morey is investigating whether or not the Tri-Council Agency would accept a late application.

Susan said the leave policy was strengthened upon learning that students from some programs were being put on personal leave to avoid paying fees. The policy now emphasizes that students can take leave only under significant personal circumstances.

Jenny suggested the policy could be reworded to clarify that students are still allowed to come to UBC. She said she has met students that interpreted the policy as not being permitted to step foot on campus. Susan suggested “for academic advancement” be added to the proposal as it relates to use of UBC facilities and resources. Max said the policy already states that students must not undertake any work related to their program. Larry said the form could be altered to clarify these points.

Clive asked if the second page of the form could be changed to read, “By signing below, we confirm that we have read Senate Policy V-302. We understand:” and then begin each statement below with “The student...” He also said the form should clarify expectations for supervisors.

Action: The form will be amended, but the policy itself will remain unchanged.

c. English proficiency requirements from international universities with some instruction in English

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

7. Forthcoming/proposed agenda items

- a. Restructuring of Graduate Council**
- b. Plagiarism and scholarly misconduct processes**
- c. Thesis embargo policy**

8. Adjournment

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

9. Next meeting: Wednesday, November 13, 2013