

Meeting of the GC Policy Committee

Tuesday, October 23, 2012; 12:30 pm – 1:50 pm

Graduate Student Centre, Room 200

Present: Douglas Harris, Beth Haverkamp, Connie Lin, Philip Loewen (Chair), Jenny Phelps, Susan Porter, Cindy Prescott, Max Read, Clive Roberts, Lisa Blomfield (minutes)

Guests: Rachel Wu

Regrets: Akram Alfantazi, Daniel Granot, Rabia Khan, Peter Leung, Michael Richards, Curtis Suttle, Marina von Keyserlingk, Daniel Weary

1. Adoption of Agenda

<i>All</i>	}	<i>That the agenda be approved, after the following amendment: change item 4 c to read 'minimum residency for doctoral students'.</i>
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Carried.

2. Minutes of last meeting (September 18, 2012)

<i>All</i>	}	<i>That the minutes of the meeting held September 18, 2012 be approved.</i>
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Carried.

3. Business arising

Philip reminded the committee of its email review and discussion regarding the format of theses including manuscripts. He presented a revised package, taking the online conversation into account, consisting of the following documents:

- Instructions for Preparing the External Examiner's Report
- Including Published Material in a Thesis or Dissertation
- Structure of a UBC Thesis or Dissertation

We plan to upload all three documents to our website so they are accessible to students. Philip will present all this at the next Graduate Council meeting on November 9.

Susan raised a point discussed in the past, asking whether it is essential to insist on a single bibliography. This could require a significant amount of re-writing, and the requirement is not necessarily the norm. The committee discussed this and it was agreed that today's word processing technology makes this requirement not too onerous. Most attendees like having access to a complete bibliography at the back of a thesis.

Jenny asked if the preface has always been required, and if theses that don't include any published work also require a preface. Philip responded that requiring a preface in all theses, including ones that contain no publications, is a new feature of this proposal. He stressed that in some cases a Preface could contain just one sentence that states that everything in the thesis is the student's original work. Jenny suggested that this could raise a lot of questions that we're not getting now. Students might not know how to interpret this, or know how detailed they need to be. The committee discussed examples of students getting help from a statistics team, having undergraduate students help with experiments, or benefitting from regular committee meetings. How should these be addressed in the preface? The committee agreed that it would be beneficial to provide examples from different disciplines on the FoGS website, and further clarification that regular consultation with your supervisory committee, colleagues and grad students does not need to be addressed in the preface.

Action: Philip will add a sentence to clarify the preface issue. We will also make it clear on the FoGS website and provide examples.

The revised documents will be circulated for information and discussion at Grad Council on November 9, 2012.

4. New Business

a. Library privileges for students on leave – now available

Jenny informed the committee that in the past when a graduate student took an official leave of absence, their library access was suspended. A couple of faculty members brought this to our attention, Jenny pursued the issue with the library, and this is now going to change. The library was happy to re-program their system to allow students on leave to have access to library resources.

At first this was only going to be extended to students on parental leave, but it turned out the library's system can't differentiate between different types of leave, so the change will apply to students on any kind of leave (including medical and personal leaves).

Jenny asked the committee if there were any concerns with this being open to students taking any kind of leave. Most agreed that students should still have access to the library while on leave, we shouldn't

prohibit students from keeping up with the literature. Doug was concerned that this could send mixed signals. There are explicit directions relating to a leave status that say a student should not use any university resources, and that when a student takes a leave they are supposed to be away from their studies entirely. Jenny agreed, and said that we need to revise the wording to address these concerns. With this new development, the statement ‘a student on leave should not use any university resources’ is no longer completely accurate.

Philip reminded the committee that this text is printed in the calendar and changing it will take a significant effort. He then proposed to draft the potential text of changes and circulate to the committee for approval. The committee agreed.

***Action:** Philip will draft a revision to the text in the calendar to reflect the recent development of students on leave having access to the library, and circulate the draft to the committee via email for approval.*

b. Membership in the Faculty of Graduate Studies

- Info: Who's eligible to supervise a doctorate? A masters? Or to serve on a supervisory committee?
- Decision: Professors of Teaching

This is to do with the newly created rank of Professor of Teaching, which now represents the top end of the instructor track, and their standing with the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

Philip called the committee's attention to the Senate Policy which outlines the parameters for membership in the Faculty of Graduate Studies and also other faculty who may be given authority to supervise graduate students but are not members of the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

Philip's thoughts are that Professors of Teaching should not be members of FoGS, but should be inserted into the section that outlines other faculty that can be offered supervisory privileges. With the introduction of this new academic rank, the wording of this policy needs to be revised, and Philip would like to take it to Senate for discussion and clarification.

There was a lengthy discussion on the categories of faculty included in section two of the policy, and how they differ from department to department.

As an aside, Philip informed the committee that we're supposed to receive a list from each graduate program annually that contains the people they consider suitable for graduate supervision and committee membership. Max added that every year each Faculty is supposed to review its calendar entry, and part of that includes updating the status of its professors, instructors etc.

Philip proposed a motion in two parts and to take the document with amendments to Graduate Council for approval and then onto the Senate Academic Policy Committee and finally to Senate.

Motion: 1. We will ensure that Professors of Teaching are excluded from membership in the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

2. We will insert Professors of Teaching as a category in section two of the policy referring to Supervision of Graduate Students by Other Faculty, so that they can supervise graduate students' research, with the Dean's approval.

<i>Loewen/Lin</i>	}	<i>That the Senate Policy regarding Membership in the Faculty of Graduate Studies with revisions as stated above be approved for submission to Graduate Council.</i>
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Carried.

c. Minimum residency for doctoral students – Doug Harris, Law

Doug started by outlining the origins of his proposal. The Law program has two required courses and they are fielding requests from students who want to fly in weekly to take these courses. This prompted the Faculty to look at the residency requirements for study at UBC. At first it appeared that there were no residency requirements for PhD students. After further investigation, including looking at residency conditions in other universities internationally, it was established that UBC does have a residency requirement of two years for PhD students, and this is in fact stated in the calendar.

Law discussed internally whether this was appropriate for their students and formulated a proposed change to doctoral residency requirements for the Faculty of Law. This involved a residency requirement based not on a length of time but rather on an element within the program, and resulted in a proposal that suggests a student should be in residency until they become a PhD Candidate.

This proposal has been passed by the Law Graduate Committee and approved by the Law Faculty Council and is now being brought before this committee for discussion.

Jenny was surprised that the two year residency requirement is stated in the calendar, and thought, similarly to Doug, that we didn't have a residency requirement. We've been interpreting this as a PhD student paying tuition for a minimum two years, not as someone living in Vancouver. There was a lengthy discussion on whether students should be required to live in Vancouver to study at UBC, how to enforce this, and the financial ramifications. Many committee members expressed concerns.

Action: *The residency policy needs to be updated and this will become a new agenda item for the Policy Committee*

In the meantime, is the committee happy to endorse this proposal for Law? Jenny commented that there needs to be consistency, and asked if we are about to create a scenario where we don't have the same rules across campus. The committee decided that some variability is tolerable, provided that all PhD students in a program are subject to the same requirements.

The Calendar language governing the residency requirement gives programs the freedom to adapt the requirement to their specific needs, subject to approval by the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies. This is reflected in Doug's motion.

<i>Harris/Haverkamp</i>	}	<i>That the Policy Committee recommend to the Dean that she endorse the proposal 'UBC Law – Proposed change to Doctoral Residency Requirement'</i>
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Carried.

d. Withdrawals: Is the choice between “voluntary” and “required” always up to the student?

We seem to have a tradition that we never require a student to withdraw without first offering them the option to withdraw voluntarily. A voluntary withdrawal does look better on their record, but does it accurately reflect the situation or the student's demonstrated academic performance?

The committee discussed a range of examples, including failing comprehensive exams, cases of gross academic misconduct, and non-academic situations, and the pro's and con's of both voluntary and required withdrawals. A voluntary withdrawal does make it easier for a student to pursue other options; offering one has proven to be an effective and low-conflict way for programs to encourage students to leave. There were concerns that the “required withdrawal” alternative could lead to a more stressful situation for programs.

Jenny raised the question of equity if some programs allow all their students to voluntarily withdraw, and some programs enforce required withdrawal. Perhaps we need something more consistent to achieve student equity?

There was lengthy discussion on how a required or a voluntary withdrawal on a transcript will be interpreted by readers of the transcript, whether we should always give students the option to voluntarily withdraw, and the possible reasons behind both modes of withdrawal. It was decided that both options are valid and it is useful to be able to decide which method is appropriate on a case by case basis. Therefore, we will make no changes to the current process at this time. We will retain our bias in favour of offering the chance to withdraw voluntarily even in cases where there is no way they can continue in the program.

e. Affiliated Theological Colleges

There was not enough time to discuss this item.

5. Back burner

a. Visiting graduate students

b. Doctorate-to-masters transfers

6. Adjournment of the meeting

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

7. Next meeting: November 27, 2012