

Meeting of the GC Policy Committee

Tuesday, September 18, 2012; 12:30 – 13:50

Graduate Student Centre, Room 200

Present: Douglas Harris, Beth Haverkamp, Connie Lin, Philip Loewen (Chair), Jenny Phelps, Susan Porter, Max Read, Michael Richards, Lisa Blomfield (minutes)

Guests: Rachel Wu

Regrets: Akram Alfantazi, Daniel Granot, Rabia Khan, Peter Leung, Cindy Prescott, Clive Roberts, Curtis Suttle, Daniel Weary

1. Adoption of Agenda

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

2. Minutes of last meeting (May 8, 2012)

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| All | } | <i>That the minutes of the May 8, 2012 meeting be approved.</i> |
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Carried.

3. Business arising

a. Embargo period for theses

This topic, Archiving and Public Dissemination of Graduate Student Research, is brought forward from previous meetings. Philip briefly summarized the committee's previous discussions, and circulated the most recent draft rubric. The broad purpose of this initiative has been more clearly expressed in the

second paragraph, titled Public Dissemination: it is to get our doctoral dissertations and masters theses on line and into the public domain as soon as possible.

Philip ran through the embargo procedures and limitations section of the draft rubric, and asked for feedback and comments, particularly on the following two items:

- (1) *Possible reasons for requesting an embargo include applying for a patent or commercializing the research, protecting a multifaceted long-term project from outside competition, complying with an approved non-disclosure agreement with a corporate partner, preparing a publication for a journal that will not accept an article based on material in an online repository, and protecting the author and/or the public from harm.*
- (2) *Delays in publication longer than 24 months from initial submission are granted only when legal and/or safety concerns remain in force, or when the student's submission is demonstrably on its way to becoming a major book or film.*

The first line was added with the Chemistry department in mind, and the second for the creative writing and film studies departments. Philip is not entirely comfortable with the wording of either of these statements, and would like to hear the committee's thoughts. The end goal is to take this to graduate council for endorsement.

Key comments and discussion points are as follows:

- Michael thinks we are making it overly complicated by describing too many possible reasons. Could we not just have the 12-month delay, and then further extensions are granted at the Dean's discretion/approval? There are going to be many different scenarios: do we really need to list reasons?
- Philip doesn't want to leave it too wide open, as then it becomes a clash of personalities rather than more objective reasoning.
- Most of the committee agreed that the word 'only' on line 11 of the paragraph should be removed as there could be other scenarios in which a delay may be justified.
- Doug asked how the Faculty of Graduate Studies would normally handle situations like this that could present a raft of different reasons, for example for leaves of absence do we have a list for things that fall outside of the norm? The pattern appears that more often than not we usually have a list of reasonable exceptions.
- With regards to the subject of applying for a patent or commercializing the research, the possibility of competing interests between supervisors and their students was discussed.

- In item (1) above the use of the word ‘journal’ was debated, in addition to the wording of the student’s submission becoming a book or film. Doug suggested that this be changed to ‘creative work’.

The committee discussed at length the need to simplify the document, perhaps simply listing the possible reasons for delaying publication, and then saying that further extensions may be granted in 6 month increments in rare/exceptional circumstances. We need to make this section of the document more concise, and Doug suggested concluding the paragraph with the line ‘*It is extremely unusual to extend an embargo beyond 5 years*’ and disposing of the remaining text that directly follows this sentence. We want to find a balance between not trying to describe every possible scenario, but also being transparent on the criteria that we use to evaluate these cases.

Action: Philip will take the remarks into consideration and circulate a revised rubric via email to the committee for further comments. If this produces a favourable outcome, we will proceed to take the document to graduate council with the hope it will eventually become a Senate policy.

b. Manuscript-based theses

This is a topic the Committee has discussed in the past. It arises from the FoGS External Review Report dated November 2011. The external review committee did not agree with UBC’s rules on manuscript-based theses, which had only recently (in 2010) been amended to allow greater flexibility for manuscript-based theses and dissertations.

Philip summarised the issue, and proceeded to take the committee through his ‘Traditional versus Manuscript-based theses’ discussion document and questions.

It appears the sticking point with the review committee was the following text:

Published work must be smoothly integrated into the flow of the thesis to produce a unified and appropriately-sequenced argument. This may require changes and re-writing, and additional material may need to be added to the published work.

Philip started by drawing the committee’s attention to the expectations that we currently send to External Examiners under the heading of Overall Academic Quality/Merit (below). Are they all necessary and sufficient?

Basic expectations of the dissertation include:

1. the dissertation presents a contribution to knowledge;
2. the dissertation is likely to have an impact on the discipline;

3. the research undertaken is contextualized clearly and accurately references the larger field of knowledge on the topic;
4. the structure of the dissertation is coherent and flows logically from chapter to chapter;
5. the methodology used is described in detail, relevant to the research question(s), and employed appropriately;
6. the research results are reported fully and clearly;
7. the analyses and conclusions drawn from the research are well-justified and integrated into the larger field of knowledge;
8. the implications and limitations of the research are fully discussed;
9. the writing of the document is of a professional standard.

Philip commented that it seems that we are getting overly focussed on format and when we should be more concerned with content. Highlights from the ensuing discussion:

- Beth commented that she didn't think it was so much of the mechanics of the dissertation, but that it is understandable as a program of research.
- Susan commented that you shouldn't have to re-write manuscripts; the introduction and conclusion should bring that unification to the thesis.
- There was a lengthy discussion on re-writing and changing a publication for the sake of the thesis, whether the introduction and conclusion are enough to allow the dissertation to stand on its own, in addition to what a PhD is supposed to demonstrate.
- Philip would like this discussion document to allow the committee to contemplate some changes that would have the effect of taking away the two sentences relating to the formatting and potential re-writing of published works, and perhaps adopting a more holistic way of communicating to students what we want to see in their theses.
- Michael commented that the introduction and the conclusion are key, and as a supervisor you have to make sure that they tie the articles together.
- Philip was hoping to streamline the current requirements (items 12-15) substantially, if we were able to use the external examiner instructions as the guiding principles. We need a clearer distinction between the structural requirements and the academic criteria describing a thesis.
- There was a lengthy discussion on whether it should be called a manuscript based thesis.

- Philip would like to replace item 4 in the external examiner instructions with something that works no matter what the structure of the dissertation may be.
- Some committee members thought there should be two separate sets of instructions, one for traditional theses and one for manuscript-based theses, and others disagreed. The overall structure of the thesis was discussed. Philip pointed out that maybe we could incorporate an “examples include” section within the guidelines.
- Max commented that some universities are leaning away from specifying one of two different formats of theses.
- The committee discussed the different approaches to structure and format based on discipline.
- Doug suggested that the simplest way to solve this is to amend the fourth bullet point in the list of expectations that are sent to the external examiner, and to condense items 12 - 14 in the dissertation requirements. It was also mentioned that it might be helpful to state somewhere in the requirements that the thesis can be either in the form of a traditional dissertation or a manuscript-based dissertation.

Philip commented that an option would be to amend item 13 (Research Chapters), and add something along the lines of: ‘A previously published research paper could form a research chapter’.

***Action:** Philip will take the remarks into consideration and circulate a revised document via email to the committee for further comments.*

c.Back-burner report: Visiting graduate students; doctorate → masters

Jenny started by giving the committee a brief background on the topic of visiting graduate students. We have been working for quite some time to create better mechanisms to bring people who are graduate students at other universities to UBC for a period of time, either to do courses or research.

One current policy that hasn’t changed is that a student may actually be admitted to UBC as a visiting graduate student. This is primarily for the purpose of taking courses. In those cases, we do need them to apply to the university and then they can take courses for credit. We may however try and loosen up some of the application requirements (for example requiring copies of official transcripts rather than originals).

The other, more complicated, side of this relates to people who want to come to UBC to do research for a period of time. We want to be able to give these individuals student status (so they can access student resources on campus) but there are a variety of complications, including the fact that they don’t have anything to register in, the terms they visit for can be anywhere from a month to a year, and often their visits don’t coincide with academic terms.

Currently, management of these students is handled by Faculty Relations, and the students come into UBC as Visiting Scholars. This really isn't the right place for these students, and as such it has been decided that Go Global will take over this process, including providing relevant information and support to these students, tracking them, and enabling them to have some kind of official standing at UBC.

The contentious element of this situation is whether there should be any fees associated with visiting graduate student researchers. Up to this point there hasn't been any fees, however the Provost's office thinks fees should be collected in order to cover the costs of tracking these students.

We went through a process of establishing what a reasonable administrative cost would be. The University of Toronto has a \$500 fee + student fees, and we will probably follow this track. A proposal is currently in development, and eventually this will go to the Senate Academic Policy Committee, and then on to Senate.

This discussion has somewhat bypassed this committee, as it's not really about creating policy. This is more to do with creating administrative mechanisms for bringing these students in, keeping track of them and charging them an administrative fee.

There was a lengthy discussion on whether we should be charging fees, and the impact of this on participation, and the issue of compliance. The committee supports the idea of being able to track these students, but is concerned about the effect these new fees will have on international collaborative efforts.

Jenny will ask for the final proposal to come before this committee for consultation before it is put forward at Senate.

Philip commented that the doctorate to masters transfer issue is still on our agenda and will be discussed at a later stage.

4. New Business

a. Membership in the Faculty of Graduate Studies

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

This will be discussed at the next meeting.

b. Affiliated Theological College

Someone has asked the Dean to review our position on using credentials from UBC's Affiliated Theological Colleges for admission to grad studies at UBC. Philip has opened this discussion and we'll touch on it at another meeting.

5. Adjournment of the meeting

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

6. Next meeting: October 23, 2012