

## Graduate Academic Policy Committee Meeting

### MINUTES

9 November 2016

12:30pm–1:50pm

Room 200, Graduate Student Centre, 6371 Crescent Road

**In Attendance:** Ljiljana Biukovic, Matthew Evenden, Cyril Leung, Mark MacLachlan, Max Read, Anna Ringsred, Clive Roberts, Wendy Robinson, Jenny Phelps, Susan Porter, Jenna Shapka, Belsher Sidhu, Larry Walker (Chair), Zhaoming Xu

**Regrets:** John Ries

**Absent:** Tom Chang, Yousry El-Kassaby

**Minutes:** Josephine Ok

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#### 1) Introductions and regrets

New members: Anna Ringsred (GSS) and Belsher Sidhu (GSS)

Departing member: Jenny Phelps is starting a new position on December 1, 2016 as Associate Registrar and Director, Transformation, Enrolment Services. She will continue partially as Senior Advisor to the Dean, Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies until April 2017 or longer.

#### 2) Adoption of the agenda

All	}	That the agenda be approved.
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Carried

#### 3) Minutes of the meeting held 12 October 2016\*

All	}	That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2016 be approved.
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Carried

#### 4) Approval of candidates for degrees – November conferral (N = 601)

Zhaoming Xu, Clive Roberts	}	That the candidates for degrees (November conferral) be approved and forwarded to the Senate for approval, and that the Dean, in consultation with the Registrar, be empowered to make any necessary adjustments.
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Carried

#### 5) Updates from the Chair

The Chair reported that the Senate Academic Policy Committee has approved the revisions to our policy on Academic Regulations and will go to the Senate next week. The changes to the policy on doctoral admissions (fast-track and direct-entry) have been approved by the Senate Admissions Committee and will also go to Senate next week.

## 6) New Business

### a) Draft Senate Policy V-130: *Requirements for the Production, Distribution, and Content of Course Syllabi* (for discussion)

The Chair introduced this item which sets minimum requirements for the production, distribution, and content of course syllabi (see attached materials). The Senate Academic Policy Committee has drafted this policy, which is now being circulated for consultations. A course syllabus represents a contractual agreement between the university and students, providing clear expectations on course outcomes, as well as protection from inconsistencies between the syllabus and the course, in-action. The Chair requested feedback on required items on the syllabus, any recommended items, and any arising issues.

#### Discussion Points:

- M. MacLachlan asked whether syllabi must be distributed both online and in paper
- L. Walker answered that syllabi can be distributed by paper or electronically
- C. Leung asked if there needs to be more detailed descriptions of courses in the Calendar
- L. Walker replied that whatever is in the calendar must be replicated in the syllabus, but to his knowledge, course descriptions do not need to be added to the Calendar
- C. Roberts noted that as Chair of the Curriculum Committee, there's been discussion over posting course descriptions online as a course requirement for easy access if there are discrepancies between class and syllabi, but this idea hasn't moved into any action yet
- L. Walker mentioned that there's been discussion over the desirability and feasibility of archiving course syllabi, and suggested that perhaps J. Phelps may take on this issue in the future at the Registrar's office
- B. Sidhu asked, what about courses where the lectures evolve over time?
- L. Walker answered that syllabi requirements must indicate a general direction of the course, but does not need to state an exact schedule; there will be room for flexibility
- L. Walker noted that some have asked for a syllabus template, which would be useful
- M. Evenden agreed that there needs to be a syllabus template, if minimum requirements are to be set
- C. Roberts also agreed on the syllabus template, as some off-campus instructors also teach courses and may not be aware of the University's standards
- M. Evenden also noted that some departments in the Faculty of Arts have their own syllabi archive, and that perhaps this might be another option to archiving syllabi, rather than a central archive
- A. Ringsred asked, how many courses currently do not have a syllabus?
- L. Walker answered that the larger issue is the problems that arise from inconsistencies between syllabi and courses, such as changes to syllabi that students grieve or appeal
- J. Shapka asked if there will be a statement of respectful environment included
- M. Evenden asked, whose responsibility would it be to ensure compliance with the provisions of this policy?
- L. Walker answered that most likely the heads of administrative units, or whomever is responsible for arranging teaching assignments would presumably be responsible

The Chair requested members to continue to pass along feedback to him regarding this policy as it goes through consultations.

### b) G+PS Strategic Plan (for discussion)

S. Porter led the discussion for item b) G+PS Strategic Plan, which was first introduced at the Grad Council meeting on October 13, 2016. She requested feedback on the planning process that G+PS should take to form the Plan, as well as referring members to the eight discussion questions listed in the handout to open the discussion (see attached materials).

Planning Process:

1. Circulate this handout for consultations with faculties
2. Create a draft plan and circulate for feedback (could be done in web-form)

Discussion Points:

- M. Evenden agreed with the planning process, and suggested including these ongoing consultations with all faculties as a component in the strategic plan
- One of the challenges of G+PS is that so much is covered, and yet faculties are unaware of the coverage and this leads to the faculty making decisions, sometimes uninformed
- G+PS should keep communications up to date and informed; they should continue building relationships and dialogue across all faculties
- S. Porter noted that one of the plans is to engage faculty more, at the same levels of engagement with graduate program staff
- S. Porter asked for any feedback on the bigger dialogue in graduate education – where do you see graduate education headed?
- C. Leung asked, where does internationalization fit in, in the current draft?
- S. Porter answered that perhaps internationalization could be added as another *'Principle,'* titled *'Global Engagement'*
- J. Phelps suggested editing the column *'Community Engagement'* to *'International & Community Engagement'*
- M. Evenden suggested adding *'Administration of the 4YF'* as a bullet-point under *1. Recruitment*
- J. Phelps suggested compiling a list of things G+PS is already doing, and what G+PS would like to do going forward; many members agreed with this suggestion
- C. Roberts noted that he'd like to see faculties put more effort in assessing quality assurance of graduate programs in program reviews
- There was also a concern over conflict-of-interest in reviews, where professional buddies would review each other
- C. Roberts suggesting adding a bullet point in *3. Student, PDF Support - 'Build on the current strength of support programs for grad students – (i.e., from 'how to write thesis' to 'research integrity')*
- J. Phelps asked how the G+PS strategic plan could be linked to the university-led strategic plan
- In terms of recruitment, what does G+PS do effectively and what does the university do effectively?
- Z. Xu suggested integrating the needs and wants of each faculty that are also creating strategic plans in graduate education
- A suggestion was made to increase more community-building for graduate students, at G+PS and at the university level (i.e., a new graduate student space on the 4-5<sup>th</sup> floor of Koerner Library, called the Grad Research Commons)
- S. Porter asked a challenging question, does the Faculty of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies need to exist at UBC?
- A. Ringsred commented that from a student's perspective, YES – especially the professional development workshops
- From a Graduate Advisor's perspective, G+PS is invaluable in all of the services that it provides

- G+PS offers a centralized office for graduate programs, as it is not possible to contain all programs in each individual units
- There is a strong appreciation for the consistency of G+PS in its practices, as well as a great deal of sensitivity and flexibility with many complex cases
- Smaller faculties need support from G+PS; it would be difficult to keep up with the larger faculties if G+PS was gone
- G+PS needs to exist, to enforce quality assurance and act as an impartial decision-maker
- G+PS represents a historical tradition
- S. Porter asked, what are some of the pain points at G+PS?
- Recognizing that the requirements set across all faculties related to funding can be difficult for some faculties; a solution would be to maintain ongoing consultations with these specific faculties to work through these difficulties

Members suggested more support in:

- Emphasizing, at the university level, the importance of assessing a professor's ability to supervise graduate students as part of the tenure-and-promotion process
- International student support
- Doc exams scheduling – communicating to faculties that exams can take place in other rooms at UBC, granted that the room meets all requirements (G+PS has a handout on room requirements for doctoral exams)
- Perhaps more direct communication to all graduate students, rather than grad advisors (sometimes communication is lost)
- To continue to ask these discussion questions even after the strategic plan is finalized; to maintain ongoing communications with faculties

Susan thanked everyone for their contributions and will continue to consult on the strategic plan.

## **7) Adjournment**

*Lunch provided*

\*Minutes of previous meetings are available here:

<http://www.grad.ubc.ca/faculty-staff/graduate-council/academic-policy-committee-previous-meetings>