

MINUTES

Meeting of the GC Policy Committee Wednesday, 14 September 2016, 12:30pm–2:00pm

Room 200, Graduate Student Centre, 6371 Crescent Road

Present: Tania Astorina (in lieu of Ljiljana Biukovic), Tom Chang, Janice Eng (via teleconference), Matthew Evenden, Cyril Leung, Mark MacLachlan, Jenny Phelps, Max Read, John Ries, Jenna Shapka, Larry Walker (chair), Zhaoming Xu, Josephine Ok (minutes)

Regrets: Ljiljana Biukovic, Yousry El-Kassaby, Susan Porter, Wendy Robinson

Absent: Clive Roberts, two GSS representatives (not yet elected for 2016-17)

1) Introductions and regrets

New members: Cyril Leung (Applied Science), Mark MacLachlan (Science), John Ries (Sauder), Jenna Shapka (Education)

2) Adoption of the agenda

All } *That the agenda be approved.*

Carried

3) Minutes of the meeting held 11 May 2016*

All } *That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 May 2016 be approved.*

Carried

4) Approval of candidates for degrees – September conferral (N = 701)

All } *That the candidates for degrees (September 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.*

Carried

5) English language proficiency requirement (for information only)

Larry reported that the University Senate has approved revisions to the English Language Proficiency Requirement for admissions to graduate programs in the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (G+PS), effective for admissions beginning January 2017. The revisions resemble the undergraduate standard of English language proficiency scores, and now require a minimum overall score and minimum component score on language proficiency tests such as the TOEFL and IELTS. Complete details on the new requirements can be found in the University Calendar at: <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=12,204,345,0>.

These are minimum score requirements set for admissions to all programs in the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral studies. Individual programs may set higher requirements if they wish to do so. Each program has been prompted to update their requirements by **14 October 2016**, after which date the G+PS minimum requirements will be applied.

Max (Associate Director, G+PS Student Academic Services) will be sending out an email reminder next week to all graduate programs to update their requirements before the deadline.

6) Doctoral exams report for 2015-16 (for information only)

Larry provided his yearly report on doctoral exams, which he oversees. For the school year 2015-16, a total of 544 doctoral exams were scheduled with 23 'problem' exams. The problems in these exams included the following:

- Negative external examiner's report (resulting in postponement of the exam)
- Re-examinations
- Unsatisfactory dissertation or revision
- Academic misconduct (2 cases)

The ratio of 'problem' cases to the total number of exams is in line with previous years, with a slight increase from last year's ratio.

This past summer, the G+PS office ran a trial of scheduling exams in August (which used to be a blackout period). This provided students more flexibility in scheduling exams. As a result of its success the office will continue to schedule exams in August next year, leaving just December as a blackout period.

7) Revisions to Calendar entries concerning G+PS academic regulations – Academic Record & Academic Appeals (for approval)

Larry proposed revisions to the UBC Calendar:

- move two sub-sections under Academic Record to new sections under Academic Regulations
 - Academic Appeals
 - Student Conduct and Discipline
- under the new section on Academic Appeals
 - add Review of Assigned Standing
 - clarify the process for appeals (instructor if applicable, graduate advisor or head, and delete disciplinary dean)

A few notable changes (found on the webpage [Senate Appeals on Academic Standing](#)) include:

- a) Not all evaluations of academic standing for graduate students occur within the context of coursework (e.g., comprehensive examinations) and so the injunction to begin the appeal with the faculty instructor is not always appropriate, hence the inclusion of the phrase, “if applicable.”
- b) All graduate students are enrolled in a graduate program with a designated graduate advisor; however, not all graduate programs are encased within departments or schools (e.g., Neuroscience), hence the next step in the appeal process could be to either the graduate advisor or department head.
- c) It is not appropriate for the disciplinary dean to be involved in the appeal process and that step has been deleted. The disciplinary faculty is not involved in evaluating graduate student progress and has no responsibility or authority in that regard. The next step in the appeal process is to the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.

These changes are being proposed to provide greater clarity when navigating these topics on the G+PS website.

<i>Mark MacLachlan</i>	}	<i>That the revisions to Calendar entries concerning G+PS academic regulations – Academic Record and Academic Appeals be approved.</i>
<i>Jenna Shapka</i>		

Carried

8) Part-time doctoral student status – with Janice Eng via teleconference (for discussion)

This item was first introduced for discussion at the previous Grad Policy Committee meeting on May 11, 2016. Janice has drafted a ‘Justification for UBC part-time PhD classification’ and ‘Description of Part-time Doctoral Classification’ (material handout #8) after meeting with various faculties at UBC as well as other Canadian universities. She requested input on directions moving forward with this policy, in particular focusing on two areas:

- A general framework for the classification of ‘part-time student status’
- Determining the processes for departments to adopt this policy and get approved to admit students on part-time student status

A discussion with questions regarding the policy ensued:

- In conjunction with the minimum funding package (item #9 in agenda), how can we ensure that this policy doesn’t create loopholes for students to gain admission if they weren’t accepted under full-time (guaranteed minimum funding) study? And vice-versa, a loophole for departments to admit students selectively between part-time and full-time studies?
- Janice: To prevent these loopholes, the classification of part-time student status must be clearly defined (e.g., working professional relevant to degree) and proper documentation must be provided (e.g., employment letter).
- Will part-time students be able to switch to full-time?
- Janice: Only under exceptional cases (e.g., a teacher enrolled in part-time study is laid off, so it makes sense to allow a switch into full-time studies when not working anymore)

- What about switches from full-time to part-time?
- Janice: No, mainly due to conditions of admitting the student under full-time studies (e.g., supervisor's funding only covers the expense of a full-time student).
- Will there be a maximum time allotment per each stage of study to complete the degree?
- Janice: In terms of time to completion yes, but there won't be a specified deadline for each individual step.
- What is the timeline for this policy to go into effect?
- Larry: The policy must go pass through several levels at UBC before it can be approved: Graduate Policy Committee, Graduate Council, Senate Policy Committee and Senate Admissions Committee, before going to University Senate
- Janice: the current goal to have policy in effect for January 2018 admissions

Overall, there was some concern that full-time students would not be able to switch into part-time, and some believed that this decision should be left 'subject to approval,' for each department to decide. Others felt that leaving things to the departments sometimes resulted in inequities in decision-making ('good supervisor' vs. 'bad supervisor'). It was also noted that some departments will likely not participate in this policy of part-time studies due to nature of the program (e.g., Chemistry). Ultimately, it is up to each department to decide to adopt this policy or abstain. A member commented that discussions should be ongoing with various departments in creating this policy. After a lengthy discussion, Janice thanked everyone for the input and will continue to work on this policy.

9) Minimum funding package for PhD students – with Janice Eng via teleconference (for discussion)

Janice also reported on the minimum funding package policy (material handout #9) which provides a minimum of \$18,000/year to all full-time PhD students (domestic and international) for each of their first four years of study (excluding leave of absences). Janice reported on the background behind the need for such a policy, the potential advantages and disadvantages, and a working draft of the policy document with a request for feedback from the Grad Policy Committee.

A discussion began with one member asking if this document was ready for circulation at faculty meetings – Janice said yes. Another member asked if this funding package included tuition, and the answer is no. A member commented that his faculty was in favour of this policy. Another member mentioned that his faculty was already providing more than this minimum amount. In one faculty, a member noted that a minimum funding policy would be quite difficult to adopt due to limited resources, but there was acknowledgement behind the need for such a policy. There was also some discussion over the wording 'if a student receives additional funding (e.g., scholarship) their support from UBC would be reduced.' Members voiced concerns that this could de-motivate some ambitious students.

Janice noted that in her visits to various faculties and departments, this policy has in general been well received. She also mentioned that in her consultations with Ontario universities, these universities did not see a major reduction in the enrolment of students post-policy.

The proposed timeline for this policy is to become effective on January 2018.

Janice will continue to work on the two policies and will bring final drafts back to Policy Committee for approval before moving to the next stage. She invites the Policy Committee to contribute further feedback related to both policies.

[Note: both policies are currently specific to UBC-Vancouver only.]

10) Revisions to the G+PS website description of a dissertation (for approval)

Members in the G+PS office have made draft edits to the G+PS website description of a dissertation. The need for these revisions arise from the Public Scholars Initiative where scholarly work can take on many forms and include scholarly artifacts (e.g., film and other audio, visual, and graphic representations, and application-oriented documents such as policy briefs, curricula, business plans, computer and web tools, pages, and applications, etc.), so long as they are also described and analyzed in a scholarly context. A summary of revisions include:

- Replace the word ‘*research*’ with ‘*scholarship*’ to broaden the scope of scholarly work that might be in a dissertation
- Emphasize that these scholarly artifacts, once in a dissertation, are also open to public access
- Include the different areas in a dissertation where scholarly artifacts can be added

[Note: This item is considered a ‘soft’ policy, meaning it does not need to pass through the usual stages of University Senate, as it is not in the UBC Calendar, but is found on the G+PS website.]

<i>Jenna Shapka</i>	}	<i>That the revisions to the G+PS website description of a dissertation be approved.</i>
<i>Thomas Chang</i>		

Carried

11) Adjournment: 2:00pm.

Lunch provided

*Minutes of previous meetings are available here:

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