

**Meeting of the GC Academic Policy Committee**

Wednesday, May 7, 2014; 12:30 pm – 1:50 pm

Graduate Student Centre, Room 200

**Present:** Brian Bemmels, Ljiljana Biukovic, Colúm Connolly, Elizabeth Croft, George Furey, Beth Haverkamp, Gail Murphy, Jenny Phelps, Susan Porter, Max Read, Clive Roberts, Larry Walker (Chair), Jessica Iverson (minutes)

**Guests:** Tom Chang, Taraneh Sowlati

**Regrets:** Peter Leung, Cindy Prescott, Kishor Wasan

**Absent:** Michael Richards, Daniel Weary, Marina von Keyserlingk

**1. Introductions and regrets**

**2. Adoption of the agenda**

Larry proposed modifications to the agenda. Under New Business, he added a Rolling Graduation Calendar entry that requires approval. He also added the changing PhD and professional master's degrees to the list of discussion items.

All } That the agenda be approved.

Carried.

**3. Minutes of the last meeting (March 12, 2014)**

All } That the minutes of the meeting held March 12, 2014 be approved.

Carried.

**4. Chair's remarks**

Larry provided an update on Doc Exams. Jenn Fletcher, the Doc Exams Coordinator, is going on maternity leave shortly. Laura Keith, an assistant in the unit, will replace Jenn for the duration of her leave.

The high level of negative external examiner reports and re-examinations seems to have settled down; the year will likely end with typical numbers of each.

## **5. Updates**

### **a. Continuous registration policy**

Larry has been researching the issue of continuous registration to better understand what it entails and to determine the different tuition and registration models UBC has in place. He hopes to report back to the Committee in September. At this point Larry senses that the problems associated with changing to alternate models will overwhelm the minor problems that currently arise with regard to leaves of absence. There are a variety of tuition and registration models currently operating, making the policy difficult to restructure.

## **6. Graduate Symposium to be held June 6, 2014**

Jenny discussed the symposium that will be taking place in June. She said hopefully it will be an inaugural session. The event will focus on the future of graduate education, specifically the PhD. She circulated flyers to the Committee. Grad Studies has been doing a lot of thinking about the changing landscape for PhD graduate trajectories, especially in terms of careers. The graduate education community at large has been considering how the traditional structures of PhD education may not be optimally preparing students for the wide range of careers and social roles that they may fill, which will be one major focus of the symposium. The symposium will also address graduate/doctoral education and its connection to serving the public good. There are a couple of different panel and discussion sessions on the agenda. There will be two guest speakers: Dr. Andrew Szeri, Dean and Vice Provost for Graduate Studies at Berkeley, and Dr. Russell Berman, former President of the Modern Languages Association, and a faculty member at Stanford. There are fifty attendees confirmed so far, but there is room for up to 100. Grad Studies is eager to spread word and get people involved.

Susan said there have been conversations about the future of graduate education in multiple venues. She senses there is a real interest in the topic, and said it is something that can be quite radical. She wants to engage the Committee sooner rather than later because there would be policy implications (i.e., what a dissertation is, what a supervisory committee looks like). At some point, the Committee would need to be involved.

## **7. Restructuring of Graduate Council approved by Senate [implementation document attached]**

Larry reminded the Committee that the restructuring of Grad Council was approved at the previous meeting. Both the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies and the Senate have since approved the new structure, and it is now ready to be implemented. Grad Council essentially remains as it was as the legislative and administrative authority for the Faculty. It has been cut in size dramatically in the hopes of actively engaging people in decision making. Part of that entails having members more frequently sit on the three standing committees of Grad Council (Policy, Scholarships and Curriculum).

The new Grad Council structure was quickly passed by Senate; the intention was for it to take place for the 2014/2015 academic year. New members are needed for fall, and Larry suggested a required response date of August 29, 2014, for naming representatives. Determining who the members will be is the responsibility of each Faculty, so Larry wants to allow time for that.

There are 22 faculty members from the various Faculties on Grad Council. The new bylaws specify that each Faculty chooses its own representatives. The large Faculties each have three members; the small Faculties each have one. Larry said it is important that the large Faculties attempt to have

membership that represents their diversity; it would be undesirable if some disciplines were not well represented. He intends to emphasize this point when the Faculties are contacted. Faculty members will be appointed for three year terms. Larry will send memos to the Faculty Deans and Associate Deans of Grad Studies that set out parameters and ask for action. He expects the Associate Deans to make it happen.

Discussion points were as follows:

- Susan asked if an Associate Dean is the appropriate representative for the small Faculties that only have one member. Brian said that would make sense for Sauder. Ljiljana said Law has always had an Associate Dean for Grad Studies act as a Grad Council representative, but she is not sure if that will continue to be the case because the Faculty is creating a new governance document that changes the way in which roles are performed and people are appointed. Law is trying to involve as many of their members as possible.
- Susan said it comes down to the purpose of Grad Council, and there are multiple. One is to represent the interests and issues of the Faculties, and another is to provide expertise and wisdom to the group—it is not necessarily a representative thing. She said a problem that has arisen on the Scholarships Committee is that some of the members are not representatives for their Faculties, so there is no two-way street of feedback and information. There must be a good mechanism for communicating within a Faculty—this is an important aspect.
- Tom said it would be desirable if Faculties could choose someone other than the Associate Dean of Grad Studies to act as the liaison. Larry said the dynamics within each Faculty will differ, and Grad Studies appreciates that diversity—nothing is mandated. Some units wanted a mandate, but Grad Studies is trying to make the issue sensitive to Faculties' needs.
- Jenny said it would be good to engage more people beyond the Associate Deans where possible; not all graduate-related issues should fall on their shoulders.
- Gail asked for clarification of what it means to serve on Grad Council and its various committees. Larry said there will be a minimum of four Grad Council meetings per year, but between meetings members will be expected to serve on at least one standing committee. The situation now is that a significant proportion of committee members are not members of Grad Council, which has created a disjunction.
- Beth agreed that it would be good to have faculty members other than Associate Deans serve on Grad Council; however she would still want some connection with those people back in her Faculty (Education). Departments have different relationships with Grad Studies, so it is important that she is in the communication loop. Larry said a feedback structure could be organized in-house.
- Tom asked if the single representative from small Faculties would be expected to serve on all standing committees. Larry said no.

The new bylaws add two graduate program staff to Grad Council. Faculties will identify and nominate good staff that they think will be appropriate for the role, and Susan will choose two from the pool of nominees. Larry noted there are many knowledgeable and experienced staff and they have been underutilized at the policy level. Program staff will also serve three year terms.

There are six student representatives. The Graduate Student Society will determine how to elect their members. Students serve one year terms. Colúm said the GSS is already figuring out how to ensure there is diversity on Grad Council.

There are a number of ex-officio members. The VP Students is a new member. Two Senators have been elected to serve for the next three years: Larry and Thomas Schneider (Classical, Near Eastern, and Religious Studies). Jenny Phelps will also officially be joining Grad Council.

## 8. Business Arising

### a. Leave of Absence / Library privileges: proposed Calendar change

The leave of absence/library privileges issue was discussed in October 2012. The Chair at the time was supposed to report back to the Committee but did not, so there is an outstanding action item. The proposal is to add a sentence to Calendar that would allow on-leave students to retain their library privileges. When the Parental Accommodation Policy was introduced the intent was that those students could retain their library privileges, but because the library cannot distinguish between different types of leaves, all students can continue to use the library.

<i>Elizabeth Croft</i> <i>Beth Haverkamp</i>	}	<i>That the revised Graduate Student Leaves of Absence policy be approved.</i>
---	---	--

Discussion points were as follows:

- Jenny thanked Elizabeth for instigating action to work with the library to address this gap. Elizabeth thanked the Committee for their work.
- Clive said the wording of the paragraph in question was inappropriate, as the library is part of the University's resources. He said it sends a bit of a mixed message. Larry acknowledged the mixed message and said he did not know how to get around it.
- Elizabeth clarified the original intention of the policy: students on parental leave cannot easily shut down their research and then hope it is still there when they return; retaining library privileges will allow those students to continue progressing while on leave. Beth asked if library privileges alone are enough. Elizabeth said navigating the issue of students taking leave and continuing to use resources is a difficult issue, but to allow students to continue their research is a good accommodation.
- Susan said it is unfortunate there is no part-time option. Elizabeth said the government does not allow part-time studies for students on parental leave. Gail said the government has recently softened that policy—students can work a certain number of hours per week. Susan said the Committee has discussed a part-time PhD in the past; some universities have the option. Larry said there are funding implications.
- Clive said he is worried about the wording of the policy where it relates to students on leave for medical reasons. He would not want to discourage those students from accessing health services, nor would he want those services to be cancelled. He asked if the language could be revised. Jenny confirmed that on-leave students can still access some services, like counselling and health. Clive said students may interpret the policy as forbidding them from using the services that would help.
- Susan asked what other services students can use while on leave. Jenny said all student services will not turn students away. Susan suggested the policy could say students cannot access academic resources apart from the library.

- Jenny suggested removing “University’s facilities or resources” altogether. What the policy is trying to convey is that students cannot make tangible academic progress toward their degree requirements if they are not paying tuition, and that they cannot expect to meet with their supervisors (and vice versa).
- Beth reminded the Committee that part of the original motivation for the Leaves of Absence policy was to prevent students from taking leave near the end of their programs so they could write their dissertations while avoiding paying tuition. She said the policy is not so much about using physical resources as it about addressing whether students are making progress on their degrees and using supervisory time.
- Gail asked if on-leave students are covered by Worker’s Compensation in lab situations. Susan said they probably are.
- George asked for clarification on what the Committee meant by “end run.” Beth explained that students vary in the amount of time they take to reach candidacy and write their dissertations, and some extend their programs by taking leave, which stops the clock on their time to completion. The policy encourages students to keep progressing. Clive said there are other types of leave students take; the policy does more than just address those attempting to extend their programs. He supported Jenny’s suggestion of removing “University’s facilities or resources.”
- Jenny suggested revisiting the wording to get more specific. Elizabeth asked if the different types of leave could be separated (parental versus professional, for example). Larry reiterated that the problem is the library cannot distinguish among the five types of leave.
- Tom asked about students who complete internships. Should their library access be denied? Larry and Max said students could take professional leaves, but an internship is not typically considered a professional leave. Beth said the question is whether students continue to pay tuition during their internships.
- Elizabeth said the University of Manitoba charges students on parental leave a small fee to maintain their library privileges; that is how those students are differentiated. Jenny said UBC students currently pay an on-leave fee, but it is not specifically for library use.
- Gail suggested, “While on a leave of absence, graduate students have access to the library, but they shall not use any of the University’s other facilities or resources...” The Committee liked the suggestion.
- Susan said ultimately students are not to make progress on their degree requirements while on leave, although arguably some internships may count toward those requirements. Larry said students would be registered in internship courses if the internship counts toward their degrees.
- Susan said at this point the Leaves of Absence policy has not been problematic, but Jenny said she has had students interpret the policy as “I can’t set foot on campus while I’m on a leave.” Jenny said rewording is needed, and she liked Gail’s suggestion.
- George suggested adding positive services (like health) to the policy. He asked if it is just the library privileges that are to be retained or if there are other services as well, particularly ones that help students. Jenny supported the idea of the University taking a more supportive approach.
- Beth said keeping the language simple is key; she has also had the experience of students thinking the policy is Draconian. Whatever is decided, the message rolled out to supervisors is important; the intention of the policy must be clear.
- Clive suggested the Calendar entry make reference to a written agreement between the student and supervisor (i.e., no entry to lab). As Dentistry’s grad advisor, he has negotiated terms of leave with students. Jenny said in general it is a good idea to have some sort of plan in place, but different students are allowed to do different things while on leave.
- Susan said there is consensus on the general principles, but the wording requires more work. George asked that Grad Studies research whether or not on-leave students lose their health

insurance coverage. Jenny said that probably depends on when students go on leave because they pay for their health insurance in the September term. If they go on leave at that time, there may be implications.

Held.

## 9. New Business

### a. Rolling Graduation

Larry reminded the Committee it had previously approved Rolling Graduation, which was later approved by Senate. It has taken some time to sort out the administrative details, so Rolling Graduation has not been instituted. The Calendar production team is now waiting for those details to be confirmed. There is an approved Calendar entry, but it has yet to be published.

Rolling Graduation depends on Senate having its meeting at regular times: September, November, February and May. On rare occasions Senate meetings are cancelled, and Grad Studies realized that if one of those meetings is when students would be approved to graduate the Rolling Graduation system would fall apart. Grad Studies has been in contact with Chris Eaton, Associate Registrar for Academic Governance, to determine how to handle such cases. The Senate will sometimes vote electronically if there is non-controversial business that needs approval outside of regular meetings. Therefore, the “regular meeting” language must be removed from the Calendar entry.

Discussion points were as follows:

- Susan said Chris suggested taking out the meetings altogether, so the Calendar would read, “...graduate degrees may be approved by Senate...” In other words, approval is not necessarily at a meeting. Larry said the dates must be specified, hence stating September, November, February and May.
- Colum suggested specifying Senate must vote at those times, so it does not matter if there is a meeting.
- Max suggested, “...graduate degrees may be approved by the Senate in September, November, February and May...” The Committee liked the suggestion.

<i>Clive Roberts</i> <i>Tom Chang</i>	}	<i>That the revised Graduate Programs – Rolling Graduate Calendar entry be approved.</i>
--	---	--

Carried.

## 10. Candidates for Degrees

Colúm and George left the room for the following motion.

<i>Clive Roberts</i> <i>Brian Bemmels</i>	}	<i>That the candidates for degrees be approved and forwarded to Senate for approval, and that the Dean, in consultation with the Registrar, be empowered to make any necessary adjustments.</i>
--	---	---

Carried.

## **11. Forthcoming/proposed agenda items**

### **a. Plagiarism and scholarly misconduct processes**

Larry said this is not a high priority item because Grad Studies has not had to deal with the apparent conflict between different sets of policies, although the Faculty does have to deal with academic misconduct. The new Policy 85 seems to be counter to the Calendar entry on the issue, but ambiguity has been avoided so far.

### **b. Thesis embargo policy**

Larry briefly explained the policy. Essentially, if a student and supervisor make a compelling case why the dissertation or thesis should be embargoed for a limited period of time Grad Studies will grant a six month embargo. Extensions will be granted if progress is being made, however the longer the period the more difficult it becomes to keep the work embargoed. Larry has not encountered any issues and would like to see the item removed from forthcoming agendas.

Larry said embargo requests are common, especially for six months. The first is essentially automatic so long as there is a rationale; beyond that, he reviews the cases individually. Larry has not pulled an embargo, nor did Philip (previous Chair). Max said if there is a good reason for keeping works embargoed students and supervisors are usually willing to share it, and Grad Studies will not challenge.

### **c. Professional master's programs**

Susan said the University is very committed to massively increasing the number of professional master's programs offered. Whether or not the programs are administered by Grad Studies, admission requirements are becoming problematic. These programs are largely intended to be mid-career programs; they are not for the typical incoming graduate student who has just completed a bachelor's degree. Susan said the question is: where do we draw the line on admission requirements? Should the majority of students have a B+ average? Should students normally have a bachelor's degree? Does it matter? Should a master's at UBC normally be considered post-bachelor's?

Discussion points were as follows:

- Jenny asked if Susan is distinguishing between the professional programs currently in place at UBC (there are a number) or forthcoming programs; the existing programs generally comply with Grad Studies' admission requirements. Susan said this is a new type of program that is much more applied. Jenny then asked if there is talk of transitioning some of the existing professional programs to this new category. Susan said no. The High Performance Coaching program currently under development is an example of this new type of applied master's. It is expected that some applicants will not have an academic background, but will have other types of experience.
- Tom asked if these professional programs lead to PhDs programs. Susan said no, the programs are not research-based, they are course-based.
- Brian said in Sauder's Executive MBA program they have admitted just one student (that he is aware of) who did not have a bachelor's degree. The student was in her mid-50s and was a

CEO. Sauder will admit students without an undergraduate degree when there is a good case for it. Susan said Grad Studies already has an admissions category for students who do not meet the general requirements but do have exceptional professional experience. Students are sometimes admitted on that basis.

- Susan asked if the Committee would be comfortable with half of a cohort of graduate students not having bachelor's degrees. The consensus was no. Taraneh said those students should not be considered master's students; they should be called something else.
- Susan then asked if incoming students should have a B+ average. Clive said it can be difficult to assess international students according to that standard. Dentistry recently admitted a student based on professional experience and references because previous grades were not available. Elizabeth said there will be exceptions, but a standard is needed. There must be oversight, but there should also be capacity for exceptions.
- Beth said many Education students are older and have returned to university after spending time in a career. For her, one of the issues is how to assess academic potential that fits the programs students want to pursue. It is problematic when a large proportion of students do not meet the standards for admission to graduate studies, particularly when there is not an alternate way for assessing potential. There needs to be criteria.
- Brian said for MBA admission, research shows that an undergraduate GPA is the best predictor for success for younger students (mid-20s). But for mature students (such as those typically admitted to the Executive MBA program), grades are not the best predictor—professional work experience is. If the ultimate goal is success in a program, research suggests there is room for flexibility with regard to admission requirements.
- Beth said Grad Studies could provide guidance for assessing admissions that deviate from the B+ standard. And as new professional programs are proposed, there is also a related curriculum issue of whether or not a program fits the model of a UBC master's degree. Does it have a certain amount of research-informed content? Is it academic? The two issues go hand in hand. Professional master's is the way things are moving; Faculties are actively encouraged by central administration to develop these programs.
- Clive said he likes the use of the word "normally" in policies because it allows for leeway.
- Jenny said these forthcoming programs will want to call themselves master's degrees, but if they are not academically-based she wondered if they could be clearly marked as another specific category, like Professional Development Master's or Applied Master's. Brian said Sauder has a post-undergraduate Diploma in Accounting program that is very successful. If a program is marketed right, the fact that it is not a master's degree should not prevent people from applying. Beth said people in her Faculty want master's in the title of their degrees (i.e., MEd), but she likes the idea of differentiation. Susan said one problem is programs of this nature are becoming more prevalent, and other institutions are already offering these types of master's. To be competitive UBC must call them master's.
- Clive asked Susan if Grad Studies' entrance requirements have in the past been a barrier to graduate programs being administered by the Faculty. Susan said the graduate programs in question (MBA, MM, MEng, PharmD) have tried to keep their requirements in line with Grad Studies', so it has not been an issue. Brian said the MBA tries to abide by all Grad Studies policies.
- Susan said Grad Studies has been looking at the University of Washington, which offers a large number of professional master's programs. There are differential requirements within UW's Graduate School. Some professional programs require an undergraduate degree and experience, whereas the requirement of the Graduate School as a whole is a B average in a bachelor's degree.



- Beth said it helpful to know what comparative universities are doing. UBC is getting swept up in the influx of professional master's programs. Jenny said a working group is coming together to research the issue. Susan said other sources of revenue are needed.
- Susan said discussion of the changing PhD would be held off.

**12. Adjournment**

All } *To adjourn the meeting.*

*Carried.*

**13. Next meeting: TBD**