

**Meeting of the GC Academic Policy Committee
Tuesday, October 14th 2014, 12:30pm–1:50pm**

Room 200, Graduate Student Centre, 6371 Crescent Road

Present: Thomas Chang, Beth Haverkamp, Don Mavinic, Jenny Phelps, Max Read, Michael Richards,
Larry Walker, Daniel Weary, Neal Yonson, Daniel Fritz (minutes)

Regrets: Colúm Connolly, Gail Murphy, Susan Porter, Daniel Wood

Absent: Brian Bemmels, Ljiljana Biukovic, Cindy Prescott, Clive Roberts

1) Introductions and regrets

2) Adoption of the agenda

All } *That the agenda be approved.*

Carried

3) Minutes of the meeting held 7 May 2014*

All } *That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 May 2014 be approved.*

Carried

4) Minute that the rolling graduation vote held 5 September 2014 was carried without dissent.

Larry wanted to note that the rolling grad vote (held electronically) on September 5, 2014 was passed without objection. Rolling graduation will take place four times per year.

5) Chair's Remarks

Larry wanted to note that Graduate Council has been restructured. The first meeting of the restructured Graduate Council took place on October 9, 2014. The membership of Graduate Council has been streamlined from approximately 100 members to approximately 40 members. The meeting of the Graduate Council included discussion about the current status of graduate education. No business was passed at the October 9 meeting of the Graduate Council.

In the future, Graduate Council needs to ratify the membership of the Policy Committee. Currently, the Policy Committee has not been identified as an official committee according to the rules of Graduate Council. At this point, the Policy Committee is operating on past practice and will continue to do so.

The working group for the topic of reimagining the PhD will hold another meeting on October 15, 2014. It is anticipated that policy implications will come from the working group meeting which will need to be reviewed by the Academic Policy Committee.

6) Business Arising

a) Continuous registration policy

- Larry's Comments:
- Students in Master's course-based programs want to know why they are required to pay tuition when they are not registered in courses.
- Master's degree programs typically require continuous registration. This means that students pay tuition by installments.
- Four programs currently do not require continuous registration:
 - MET, MRSc, MFA (CRWR), LLMT
 - MDM (four different Universities are involved in this program, administered by SFU, and does not concern UBC)
- Recently, a large number of students requested to go on leave during specific terms to avoid paying fees. This creates complications for staff and programs (especially budgetary concerns).
- The rules/forms surrounding requesting leaves of absence have recently been updated to address some of these concerns.
- There are many issues with moving away from continuous registration:
 - The current graduate accounting and funding model, up to the level of the Provincial Government is based on a continuous registration system.
 - For thesis students, doing away with continuous registration would also do away with automatic registration for thesis courses.
 - Time to completion for degrees becomes difficult to assess.
 - For international students, they must be registered in order to receive study authorizations.
 - To be a resident in student housing, graduate students need to be registered.
 - Fellowship students need to be registered in order to retain their fellowship.
 - The internal GSI funding models would need to be changed to accommodate non-continuous registration.
- Larry's recommendation on the continuous registration issue was to maintain the status quo, with the reminder that tuition fees for most programs are essentially assessed on a degree program basis and paid by convenient installments. Please note, this recommendation takes into account only the programs noted above (MET, MRSc, MFA (CRWR), and LLMT) and any new programs.
- Larry also noted that keeping the status quo for course-based fee programs creates a problem concerning leaves of absence.
- Discussion points were as follows:

- Jenny asked if programs would be able to continue to use the course-based fee model for graduate programs.
- Larry answered that new programs would most likely be able to continue to use existing tuition models. Larry also noted that programs may be able to negotiate a change from one tuition system to another, but it would be a very difficult process to change the tuition model.
- Jenny noted that the discontent with the current continuous registration model generally comes from students who must pay for their program while they are unable to take additional courses or make progress (during the summer).
- Beth noted that there needs to be a good sense of transparency for the course-based programs. Students need to know from the outset that the fees are going to be assessed in a specific manner and that they will be unable to take a leave of absence.
- Jenny noted that some issues occur when a student is granted leave of absence status. Students generally want to know if they are still considered a student while they are on leave. This raises the question that, if students are not registered under the course/credit-fee, are they still considered a student and thus able to access student services? The Committee will need to seek clarification on this subject.

<i>All</i>	}	<i>That students in course/credit-fee (non-installment) master's programs not be eligible for leaves-of-absence.</i>
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Carried

b) Leaves of absence

- Larry's Comments:
- Senate policy V-302.1 states: "While on a *leave of absence*, grad students shall not use any of the University's facilities or resources, or in any other way undertake any academic or research work related to the program for which they have taken a *leave of absence*."
- A question that originally occurred was whether students will still have access to the Library while on leave.
 - The decision was made by the Library to grant resource access to students on leave. Currently, the Library resources are exempt from the policy statement.
- Another question arose as to what support services are available to students while they are on leave.
 - The sentiment was expressed that the University should facilitate students' return to their studies. Therefore, upon the recommendation of G+PS, students may be able to receive support services while on leave, although such services are at the unit's discretion.
- When on leave, students pay only the "on leave" fee (no tuition or activity fees).

- During leaves: students are responsible for their own MSP, iMed is not applicable, AMS/GSS extended health and dental can be arranged (it is a student's responsibility to obtain this), students are not eligible for the U-Pass, and student housing/student counselling/student health/etc. are generally not available.
- Larry's recommendation is not to alter the wording of the recently approved Senate policy on leaves of absence for graduate students. G+PS would simply add clarifying information to the Leave of Absence form and to the Faculty's website. This will allow students to review the stated policy and make an informed decision on whether they want to enter "leave" status.
- Discussion points were as follows:
- Jenny noted that the wording in the University policy seems too strong. She recommended the removal of "...use any of the University's facilities or resources, or in any other way..." Jenny also suggested adding an "alert" statement notifying the students that they may not be able to access certain services.
- Max and Don agreed that there should be an "alert" statement and that the statement should inform students that their status (as a student) will be changed when they go on leave.
- The Committee recommended that consultations need to be made with VP-Students to see if the Policy statement is overly restrictive for a reason. For example, is this statement overly restrictive to stop students from taking advantage of specific services while on leave?
- Jenny noted that proposing a policy statement that includes notes about "student services" may not be within the Senate's purview.
- Larry suggested that a revised agenda item should appear at the next Policy Committee meeting so that the issue can be discussed further. This will allow for additional time to receive clarification from other units and from the Senate regarding the policy.

7) New Business

a) Doctoral re-examinations

- Larry's Comments:
- Larry reviewed the results of a report on the re-examination of doctoral students for previous academic years.
- This "re-examination: category includes situation where:
 - there is a negative external examiner report (and the final university defense is then postponed).
 - students have their defense, the defense does not go well, and they are required to re-examine.
 - students fail their doctoral examination/oral defense and are required to withdraw.
- There were a higher number of doctoral re-examinations in the 2013-2014 academic year than the previous 4 years (4.5% vs. 3.0%).

- When there is a re-examination, the administrative tasks related to the re-examination process are time consuming for the G+PS associate dean and the doc exams staff.
- Larry petitioned the Committee to see if they had any insights into why there had been a higher number of re-examinations.
- Larry’s recommendation was that, in addition to the graduate advisors in the relevant program(s), associate deans be advised in the case of a negative external examiner report (and postponements), re-examinations, and failures.
- Discussion points were as follows:
- Beth noted that a possible reason for re-examinations may be due to poor choices of external examiners. She questioned whether it is becoming more difficult to secure external examiners.
- Larry responded that finding an external examiner who is at arm’s-length, and who is well-suited to critique a narrow field of study can sometimes be difficult. Still, Larry noted that there have not been an inordinate number of refusals by potential external examiners in the recent past.
- Larry also noted that students and supervisors should take into account the ideological differences that can exist within an academic field. Students and supervisors should take these ideological differences into account when they are nominating an external examiner.

All	}	That, in addition to the graduate advisors in the relevant program(s), associate deans be advised in the case of a negative external examiner report (and postponements), re-examinations, and failures.
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Carried

b) Doctoral defense locations

- Larry’s Comments:
- Programs have contacted G+PS asking why they are unable to have doctoral defenses in their home department. This basis of this question is untrue as there are no such G+PS policies restricting programs from holding doctoral defenses in their home department.
- The current procedures and policies in place for off-site doctoral exams are that the off-site location have:
 - A supervisor or grad program secretary/advisor responsible for the exam
 - An appropriate room – sufficient space, sufficient privacy, available for the appropriate duration
 - Appropriate equipment (projector, video-conferencing equipment, etc.)
 - A printed set of programs and exam instructions for the Chair
- If G+PS allows exams to be held routinely off-site, there are some benefits such as:
 - Off-site exams may increase audience attendance, especially from the student’s home program

- Off-site exams may be more convenient for some members of the examining committee
- Off-site exams allow for a larger pool of examination rooms, which would provide additional flexibility in the scheduling of exams
- Off-site exams would help to relieve the high volume of work undertaken by the doctoral exams staff
- There are also benefits to holding a doctoral exam on-site, such as:
 - On-site exams signal the significance of the occasion (an important, capstone event)
 - On-site exams signal that the doctoral defense is a “University” defense
 - On-site exams promote a sense of fairness in situational factors (not all rooms are equally appropriate for a defense)
 - On-site exams have technical and administrative support readily available from the doctoral exams staff
 - On-site exams ensure that there is an appropriate venue for in-camera discussion by the examining committee
 - On-site exams encourage attendance of other members of the general public
 - On-site exams are generally more convenient for university examiners and chairs
- Discussion points were as follows:
- Don noted that he agrees with the recommendation, but that G+PS should stress that the proposed off-site location meets all G+PS standards.
- Beth asked if it was possible to create a list of acceptable rooms based on past experiences. She also noted that the final decision on room choice should be left up to the student.

<i>Thomas Chang</i>	}	That we encourage the use of G+PS examinations rooms, but be
<i>Don Mavinc</i>		flexible in allowing other locations if those locations meet our standards.

Carried

c) Role of UBC–Okanagan faculty in G+PS

Action: Held over

8) Adjournment

<i>All</i>	}	<i>That the meeting be adjourned.</i>

Carried

*Minutes of previous meetings are available at:

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