



School of Graduate Studies

1280 Main Street West  
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada  
L8S 4L8

Phone 905.525.9140  
Ext. 23679  
<http://graduate.mcmaster.ca>

Graduate Council  
January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016 1:30 pm  
GH 111

Present: Dr. D. Welch (Chair), Ms. S. Baschiera, Dr. C. Hayward, Dr. N. Agarwal, Dr. T. Porter, Dr. B. Milliken, Mr. D. Finnerty, Mr. A. Viswanathan, Mr. R. Mah, Ms. R. Pereira, Dr. A. Shi, Dr. S. McCracken, Dr. S. Streeter, Ms. C. Brown, Dr. D. Novog, Dr. A. Deza, Dr. A. Holloway, Dr. A. Guarne, Dr. D. Gillespie, Dr. P. Swett, Dr. G. McClelland, Dr. E. Gedge, Mr. P. DeMaio

Regrets: Dr. M. Verma, Dr. A. Dean, Dr. J. Richardson, Dr. A. Roddick, Dr. E. Badone, Mr. R. Morton, Ms. A. Ion

## A G E N D A

### **I. Minutes of the meeting of December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2015**

The minutes of the meeting of December 8<sup>th</sup> were approved on a motion by Dr. Hayward, seconded by Dr. Deza with two abstentions.

### **II. Business arising**

There was no business arising.

### **III. Report from the Associate Vice-President and Dean of Graduate Studies**

Dr. Welch reported on two new initiatives put forth by the School of Graduate Studies to assist new students beginning their studies in January. The first was a welcome event for those new students. He noted that support for the session was great but the attendance was relatively low. A session to help January admits help clarify their pay will also be held. This session will allow students to ask specific questions regarding their own pay arrangements and the hope is that this will head off some confusion.

Dr. Welch also reported on the term by term scholarship payment model where students receive the full amount of their scholarship money minus tuition at the beginning of the term. There have had a few questions around this because the initial scholarship load has not happened yet. This was intentional. Dr. Welch noted that the upload would be happening in the next few days so by the end of the week scholarship support will appear in Mosaic for the remainder of the term. Anyone who does not see the support in their account after the upload should alert SGS via [gradpay@mcmaster.ca](mailto:gradpay@mcmaster.ca).

Dr. Welch reported that effective January 1<sup>st</sup> SGS has hired a Business Analyst who can speak 'Mosaic' and can participate in fixing and developing things. He noted that the BA had already been incredibly useful in terms of debugging current challenges.

Dr. Welch also mentioned that many of the scholarship competitions are coming to a head. A slightly different model has been put in place on the decision end of OGS. The application end is the same and the deadline has passed. The difference is how the awards not covered by the triagency or OGS will be handled. Instead of holding a number of mini competitions for relatively small numbers of people, Associate Deans will set the tone for their own programs.

Dr. Welch noted that there are a couple of existing working groups of Graduate Council, including a graduate pay working group as well as a graduate program handbook working group (lead by Dr. Cathy Hayward). He asked for volunteers for an interesting new working group that Dr. Tony Porter is leading. This group would review the risk assessment form. As it currently stands if the strict standards of the form are followed, graduate students can't go to about a quarter of the countries in the world. There are a number of issues for consideration and it would be good to have input from a variety of groups on this working group.

Dr. Porter expanded on the new working group. He noted that it turns out that McMaster has a risk procedure that is often not really followed or understood. It means students can't go to a lot of countries that have travel advisories – including Pakistan or Nigeria. Part of the work of the group will be to review how other universities do it and working to develop a more nuanced way of assessing the risk to students.

Dr. Welch noted that any revisions to the policy will have to be adopted by the university before they come into force.

#### **IV. Report from the Graduate Associate Deans**

Dr Miliken reported that the Faculty of Science is working to establish a number of recruiting incentives for Masters and Ph.D. students. Dr. Porter reported that in the Faculty of Social Sciences they've become interested in whether there's a way to bring together groups with public policy interests across the university, perhaps in a centre or institute. They will be getting in touch with people across the university and examining the context outside of McMaster. Dr. Agarwal noted that new EMBA program is launching this coming year and that there is quite a bit of interest already. He also noted that the faculty is working on their first intake into the new Ph.D. field in Health Management.

Dr. Hayward provided an update on the first meeting of the Graduate Program Handbook working group. She noted that all program handbooks are supposed to go through formal approval and in many faculties they never have. This can put the university at risk if a student ever appeals based on something that is in the program handbook. The Faculty of Health Science went through a handbook review where reviewers were assigned for each handbook. At their first meeting the working group discussed approaching the

associate deans about whether or not a two year plan to bring all programs into the realm of approved handbooks was realistic to move forward. The suggested plan developed by the working group to support programs and their handbooks is to come up with a minimum checklist for items to be included in a handbook, develop a process for approval and archival of handbooks and work to develop supplemental material that is general to the university and all students, a central Graduate Students Resource Handbook. Dr. Hayward noted that the student life team in SGS would need to assist in the development of this book. Next steps for the working group will be the development of an initial review and approval timeline and the development of a checklist document.

A council member noted that CUPE needs to sign off on handbooks. Dr. Welch responded that CUPE doesn't sign off – SGS provides the graduate handbooks to CUPE and they will provide clarification as required.

A council member asked what happens in the interim if there is a dispute. Dr. Hayward responded that it is dealt with by the program and Associate Dean of the Faculty in question. She noted that if there is a student appeal it normally involves the graduate calendar but program handbooks do have extra information. Dr. Welch noted that program handbooks were looked over in their entirety 8 years ago and that the issue is one of the practice, making sure that they're reviewed consistently, but there is no evidence right now that they're causing problems.

Dr. Hayward noted that some of the changes made to program handbooks as a result of the review within the Faculty included removing duplicate calendar information or updating a welcome message. Clinical programs have always had a detailed review of their program handbooks.

Dr. Hayward reported that she had participated in a recent meeting about graduate recruitment, where SGS encouraged administrators and heads of graduate programs to come out and discuss recruitment strategies. She noted that student ambassadors from the FHS ambassadors program have gone out to promote their programs in innovative settings. Dr. Hayward is happy to share the forms they've developed and said it would be great if this program was expanded across the university. At the last fair the Faculty held in the student centre, the graduate student ambassadors were magnets for students in attendance.

Dr. Swett reported that the Faculty of Humanities has connected with a research project based out of McGill that is looking at the last 10 years of Ph.D. graduates from 15 universities in Canada. The real interest in this study is the breadth of careers students are going into. History and English and Cultural Studies were the programs selected to participate from McMaster. The hope is to use this information that comes from the research project to assist programs in preparing their students for a breadth of careers.

Dr. Thompson reported on initiatives from the Faculty of Engineering. The Faculty will be holding an open house on March 1<sup>st</sup> intended to assist in the recruitment of domestic students. The Faculty is also moving forward with their industrial Ph.D. option and departments are currently decided whether or not their

programs will participate. They are also developing an innovation retreat for graduate and undergraduate entrepreneurs to assist with commercialization.

Dr. Welch asked the University Librarian, Vivian Lewis, if there was anything to report. Ms. Lewis responded that the university library had recently completed a master space plan and one of the items that the architect noted as a requirement was a larger space to support graduate student study. She also reported that the plunging value of the Canadian dollar is disastrous from a library perspective. The biggest resources for libraries are purchased in US dollars. They lost about \$700 000 from the time they submitted their budget to now and are working to protect their acquisitions budget to avoid massive cuts of serials and book budgets.

#### **V. Report from the Associate Registrar and Graduate Secretary**

Ms. Baschiera provided an update on Graduate Admissions. A number of issues have been discovered with the new application system. At the moment there is a team of 9 full time staff dedicated to sorting this out. One of the main issues involves referees being able to get through to provide a reference. Based on conversations with UTS Ms. Baschiera was fairly optimistic that communication to referees and applicants would be improved in the near future. She noted her team has been in constant contact with programs so that staff is prepared with work arounds as needed. Her team is also still operating three hour long drop-in labs weekly. A lot of the current focus is on querying the database so programs will have a better encounter with the application process. There are a number of applicants and referees that are able to get through and everyone is working hard to solve the issues for those that aren't.

#### **VI. Report from the Assistant Dean, Graduate Student Life and Research Training**

There was no report.

#### **VII. Faculty of Social Sciences Graduate Curriculum and Policy Committee Report**

Dr. Porter presented the changes. Anthropology proposed a change to their Ph.D. requirements; at the moment students are expected to do four courses, the proposed change will allow an option for students accelerated in from the M.A. to go directly to the comprehensive examination. The second change proposed by Anthropology was to change the name of a specialization within the program from 'physical' to 'biological' anthropology. Sociology proposed a change to their admission requirements to note that they will accept applicants from all disciplines in the social sciences. The program has been doing this in practice but until this point it was not reflected in the calendar. Sociology also proposed a change to the name of a research area and the creation of a comprehensive area to match to reflect the broadening of that research area. The last

change proposed by Sociology was to update their calendar copy to note that a supervised research course has restrictions attached.

Dr. Agarwal moved and Dr. McCracken seconded, 'that Graduate Council approve the curriculum changes proposed by the Faculty of Social Sciences as described in the documents.'

The motion was carried.

**VIII. Change to Scholarship Description**

Dr. Welch explained that this item was presented to Graduate Council for information only.