



School of Graduate Studies

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Graduate Council
February 23rd, 9:30 am
GH 111

Present: Dr. B. Milliken (Acting Chair), Ms. S. Baschiera, Dr. C. Hayward, Dr. N. Agarwal, Dr. T. Porter, Dr. M. Thompson, Mr. R. Mah, Mr. D. Finnerty, Mr. A. Viswanathan, Dr. D. Gillespie, Ms. B. Gordon, Dr. D. Novog, Dr. A. Holloway, Dr. G. McClelland, Dr. F. Franek (for Dr. A. Deza), Mr. M. Bui, Mr. P. DeMaio, Dr. E. Gedge, Dr. P. Swett, Dr. A. Fudge Schormans

Regrets: Dr. S. McCracken, Dr. M. Verma, Dr. A. Guarne, Dr. S. Streeter, Dr. A. Shi, Ms. R. Pereira, Mr. R. Morton, Ms. A. Ion

A G E N D A

I. Minutes of the meeting of January 19th, 2016

The minutes of the meeting of January 19th, 2016 were approved on a motion by Dr. Hayward, seconded by Dr. Swett.

II. Business arising

There was no business arising.

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

Dr. Milliken reported on a couple of items on behalf of Dr. Welch. He noted that many of the issues from the first month and a half of the term have been resolved. In particular there is now a mechanism that in place to handle overpayments. He asked Ms. Gordon to provide an update on graduate pay. Ms. Gordon reported that an email went out to the students who were affected in January and Accounts and Cashiers have now corrected manually. She asked if any other issues that arise, please do reach out to SGS.

Dr. Milliken noted that graduate admissions also seems to be moving along. A series of temporary workers have been hired to help programs deal with greater than normal workloads associated with Mosaic bugs. Dr. Milliken directed any programs who wanted to take advantage of this to contact Stephanie Baschiera's team. Ms. Baschiera provided a brief update noting that while there are still a number of issues associated with the Mosaic application, many of the big issues seem to be resolved, as applicants and referees are getting through. Admissions numbers are still down but there has been an increase in the number of Ph.D.s submitted.

IV. Report from the Graduate Associate Deans

Dr. Milliken reported that the Faculty of Science is at the outset of the process where they link current graduate students with paths to industry. The intention is to raise the profile of paths to industry for Ph.D. graduates who will end up pursuing non-academic jobs. He noted the importance of making people who

might be interested in pursuing graduate studies aware that there are jobs out there for them other than academia. Dr. Agarwal had nothing to report. Dr. Porter reported that the Faculty of Social Sciences is working on a 'research shop'. This endeavour involves graduate students helping community organizations on short term research work. He also provided a brief update on the working group on Risk Management: there had been a number of volunteers. There is a research assistant pull together some documentation and working on draft report that surveys the literature on risk management for students in hazardous countries. The working group will also be examining what work is being done elsewhere. Dr. Hayward provided an update on the graduate program handbook working group. They group has had one meeting and all program handbooks have been gathered for the GSA. Each associate dean has also received a compilation of all handbooks associated with their faculty. With respect to the Faculty of Health Sciences she reported that the student ambassador program had been quite active. They were part of a group that also engaged undergraduate students to look at all FHS affiliated programs website to see if students liked what they saw there. They conducted a fairly detailed and critical review offering suggestions to programs. These ambassadors have also been going out and having meetings with undergraduate students about opportunities for graduate education at McMaster. The Faculty is also looking back at goals that were set last year regarding recruitment. Dr. Thompson reported that the Faculty of Engineering is focused on professional development. They are setting up a large survey, potentially in concert with other universities, to see where Ph.D.s are ending up in the workforce. The Faculty plans to use this both to assist to current Ph.D. students and to use for recruitment. He noted that the Faculty also plans to implement a co-op option but are currently working through some difficulties with respect to how it will be applied particularly with respect to international students. Dr. Swett reported that the Faculty of Humanities is also interested in professional development. She noted that she had previously mentioned the Trace program, a SHERC funded project that will look back at what graduates of Humanities Ph.D. degrees have done after university. The Faculty is also funding a couple of students to go to a conference in May to focus on the future of humanities, specifically as it relates to students. The Faculty is also working to revamp the graduate aspect of the Humanities website.

V. Report from the Associate Registrar and Graduate Secretary

There was no report.

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

There was no report.

VII. Faculty of Business Graduate Curriculum and Policy Committee Report

Dr. Agarwal presented three curriculum recommendations that required Graduate Council approval. The first related to Ph.D. program in Marketing. The Marketing field wanted to introduce a new required course and pair it with an existing required course to allow students to choose between the courses. The change is intended to introduce some level of choice, the number of required courses overall remains the same. The second item for approval was the calendar copy for the new EMBA program approved last year.

The third proposed change was to the admission requirements for the graduate diploma in professional accountancy. The program currently accepts candidates from other Ontario universities. The change would allow them to accept qualified candidates from all Canadian universities.

Dr. Agarwal moved and Dr. Holloway seconded: 'that Graduate Council approve the changes proposed by the Faculty of Business as described in the documents.'

The motion was carried.

VIII. Faculty of Health Sciences Graduate Policy and Curriculum Committee Report

Dr. Hayward noted that there were two items for approval: both BDC and Child Life M.Sc. are launching their new Masters programs in September and are now accordingly putting forward their calendar copy. The calendar copy is consistent with what was described in the detailed proposal that was part of the program approval. For Child Life studies there are two streams: those with field experience and those without. Dr. Milliken noted one potential typo.

Dr. Hayward moved and Dr. Thompson seconded, 'that Graduate Council approve the changes proposed by the Faculty of Health Sciences as described in the documents.'

The motion was carried.

IX. Faculty of Humanities Graduate Curriculum and Policy Committee Report

After some discussion, it was agreed to address this item at the next meeting of Graduate Council.

X. Faculty of Social Sciences Graduate Curriculum and Policy Committee Report

Dr. Porter presented the changes. The first proposed change was to the course requirements for Globalization. The program introduced a new core required course and adjusted their course requirements accordingly. The seconded group of changes were from Health Aging and Society and included cleaning up some calendar copy around the replacement courses that students have to take if they have already completed their core courses in the Masters degree as well as a detailed process for the comprehensive examinations. The third change proposed was by Economics: the program revised their calendar copy to

include information around their new co-op courses. The final change was from Religious Studies. The program had previously expected students to have background in western religious traditions but they have found that this is not necessarily the case and have revised their admission requirements accordingly.

Dr. Porter moved and Dr. Hayward seconded, 'that Graduate Council approve the changes proposed by the Faculty of Social Sciences as described in the documents, subject to Faculty of Social Sciences approval.'

The motion was carried.

XI. Discussion of the use of 'Marginal' in Supervisory Committee Report

Dr. Milliken noted that a concern had been raised regarding the use of the 'marginal' category in supervisory committee meeting reports. The idea is that in evaluating students there might be reluctance in marking students as marginal. The reluctance may be associated with the fact that using the 'marginal' designation triggers automatic action in the form of a letter. Dr. Milliken noted that the concern was that a committee member might want to show that progress hasn't been as expected, but they also don't want to trigger a letter to the student. A council member noted that they had seen reluctance to use marginal even in cases where the student did need to do more work. One of the suggestion is to add a satisfactory category that would not trigger an alert but still signal that the students' needs to do some work.

Another council member noted that they would also like to see a 'satisfactory' category. The problem they've encountered in their program is that they'd like something between 'marginal' and 'good'. They don't mind the letter where it is required but there is a big gap between marginal and good. The concern from this council member's program is if they give a 'borderline student a 'good' and then it turns out they may indeed need more work.

Dr. Milliken noted that Dr. Welch wanted everyone to know that the only record of marginal is in their file. When the 'ship gets righted' and the student graduates, any record of marginal doesn't appear on their transcript. If creating additional categories means that 'marginal' is underutilized that might be a concern.

A council member asked if additional categories were required or if it might be best to relabel those that already exist, noting that 'Excellent', 'Satisfactory' and 'Marginal' could be appropriate. They suggested that the current set up encourages their students to achieve excellence. Another council member asked if additional categories are just coming from the committee, will it have the same weight? They suggested that one of the additional categories could trigger action that comes from the department or program.

Dr. Hayward noted that she would like to see five categories. The reality is that not everyone achieves excellence. She has also observed that there are some students who have gone from unsatisfactory to marginal. The student was then provided direction to show what their progress needs to be to be considered 'satisfactory'. She thought the marginal category was still needed in addition to unsatisfactory.

Dr. Agarwal noted there was no reluctance in his program to use marginal. In the case of a 'marginal' report the student receives very detailed feedback and the committee meets more frequently to measure progress. He was not sure about adding 'satisfactory', noting that there is a range in 'good' and that comments can be included in the form.

Dr. Porter supported adding the 'satisfactory' as more variation can show students a more finer-grained assessment.

Dr. Hayward said that another issue is over-time and out-of-time students. How can students be considered to be making excellent progress if they're not completing their degree on time? She suggested that there needed to be discussion around what each of these categories mean. Dr. Milliken responded that that was exactly what Dr. Welch envisioned: a scale to use the metrics appropriately for supervisory committee reports. Dr. Milliken noted that it was a colleague who explained the scale to him. Dr. Welch's thinking was that whether or not we go to four or five categories, there needs to be a place to direct faculty and students to clarify the use of each category. Dr. Hayward noted that for scholarly papers, some programs in the Faculty of Health Sciences have introduced a rubric and this has tremendously improved the quality of the papers. She thought there would still need to be specificity for particular programs but some general descriptors about what is considered 'satisfactory', for example, would still be valuable.

Dr. Milliken noted that the take home point from the discussion seemed to be that whether there are four or five categories, there needs to be more specificity around what each category means and that if a 'satisfactory' is noted this might need to trigger some work from the program.

A council member said that the categories need to allow for a fair amount of flexibility between programs. There are fields who just take a long time to get results, so providing an 'excellent' to overtime and out of time might still be correct in that case.

Dr. Swett said that the descriptors for each category should be on the form itself, suggesting that it was unlikely that anyone would look up what the categories mean in the middle of a supervisory committee meeting.

Dr. Porter said there seemed to be a lot of support for five categories and asked for a show of hands. All council members noted their agreement.

XII. NEW SCHOLARSHIPS

Dr. Hayward moved and Dr. Holloway seconded, 'that Graduate Council approve the new scholarships as described in the documents.'

The motion was carried.