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School of Graduate Studies

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Graduate Council
September 20th, 9:30 am
GH 111

Present: Dr. D. Welch, Ms. S. Baschiera, Ms. C. Bryce, Dr. N. Agarwal, Dr. C. Hayward, Dr. P. Swett, Dr. T. Porter, Dr. M. Thompson, Dr. B. Gupta, Mr. P. Self, Ms. V. Lewis, Dr. E. Grodek, Dr. B. Doble, Ms. N. Shen, Dr. A. Sills, Dr. D. Pelinovsky, Dr. S. McCracken, Ms. M. Badv, Dr. G. McClelland, Dr. A. Guarne, Mr. M. Widlicki, Dr. A. Dean, Dr. S. O'Brien, Dr. A. Fudge Schormans

Regrets: Dr. A. Deza

By invitation: Dr. S. Baptiste

I. Minutes of the meeting of May 17th, 2016

The minutes of the meeting of May 17th 2016 were approved on a motion by Dr. Hayward, seconded by Dr. Porter.

II. Business arising

There was no business arising.

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

Dr. Welch said it had been a very busy and interesting summer. He reported that the new graduate pay model that was mentioned at the May meeting of Graduate Council had been established over the summer and was put in place before first set of pays this academic year. He noted that there had been issues with previous graduate pays after the transition to Mosaic. A feature of the previous model was that the university would take tuition first and the student would get remained. Money was disbursed in different quantities at different times. The confusion in this respect needed to be eliminated. With the necessary permission over the summer they put in place a new pay model whose features were predictability, simplicity and money going out to the student before it came to the university. One of the main differences is that there are fewer payments now. All of the scholarship payment comes out in lumps sums at the beginning of each term and research scholarship is the same. TA pay is as it was, every two weeks during the time the student is employed. Additionally, there is now a letter generated from the financial support information provided by graduate programs. These letters

tell the student what payments they will receive and when so students can verify whether they got the right pay or not. This was also provided to graduate administrators. The pay from the Campus solutions module was intended to go on September 16th but went out one week early. 44 students did not get the pay they were due. They were identified and that money was issued prior to the original September 16th date. The first research scholarship and TA pay happened on the 16th. There were 110 students who were receiving research scholarship support for more than one grant. For reasons that haven't been entirely identified only the first grant had been applied to accounts. HR identified this and has already issued the remaining amount of money. Everybody should have the funding they are due now or in the very near future. All scholarship pays should be given to students and TA pay set up for the rest of the term.

The other difference from previous years is that tuition is due term by term. For this term the due date was September 1st but no interest will be accrued until September 30th. So students will get their first TA and scholarship pay prior to having to pay the tuition for the term. As of September 30th interest will begin to accrue on any remaining amount. When people received their offers of admission there was no implication that there is interest relief – so it's a very fair system.

A council member asked about the pay model, wondering how much they had taken into account international students. Dr. Welch responded that because research payments would be lump sum, up front, they would receive early money. The council member responded that this is only the first semester and that she had heard that international students were facing money problems, particularly those who are not doing a TA in their first term. Dr. Welch responded that he understands the concern but the idea that McMaster is an institution that loans money interest-free is not one the university recognizes. He noted that things were interest-free last year but that was due to system failure. Students do have the option to pay as much as they can and pay off the interest when it comes later on. The council member asked if they don't pay the full tuition they have to pay interest later on. Dr. Welch confirmed this. He said that programs can choose to pay more money in research scholarship to offset that in the first term and can put different amounts in different terms.

A council member asked if students in the previous system were charged interest prior to Mosaic. Dr. Welch responded that they were charged interest all the time. All the tuition for the full year was due September 1st and interest was charged after that point. The council member asked if students were charged interest when they were on payroll deduction. Dr. Welch responded that he would check on that.

Dr. Welch also reported on a campus-wide committee led by the Provost on academic regulations. There have generally been more regulations over time, not fewer. Every now and then the university needs to step back and see if these are the arrangements that they actually want. Dr. Welch is part of that team and they are looking at both graduate and undergraduate regulations. The output of the committee is expected in two years.

Dr. Welch said that welcome week had gone very well. They went off campus for the first time and held a big welcome event at Sarcoa. There was a concern that people wouldn't attend but that was not the case. He thanked the student life team and GSA.

He noted that there are going to be a number of working groups of Graduate Council and hoped that members would consider participating and providing input on how to make things better.

IV. Report from the Graduate Associate Deans

Dr. Thompson reported that the Engineering Graduate Society held their first annual barbecue on the front lawn. The intention is to bring students away from a department-centered focus to a community-based/faculty-centred focus. Engineering is beginning to draft a document in order to create a co-op program. They are trying to model what the University of Victoria is doing as that institution offers a flexible co-op/work experience model. The option would be applicable to both Masters and Ph.D. students and is another change for students to get professional skills development. He noted that Engineering is also beginning to look at raising the language requirements for admissions, noting that they are currently fairly low compared to the rest of the university.

Dr. Gupta reported that the Faculty of Science had an alumni networking event coming up.

Dr. Porter reported on the research shop where students from multiple faculties do research with community partners. This year it included 8 partners and 36 students from all 6 faculties. They hope to make it a permanent feature. He also reported on the review of the RMM 801 process for student travel. EOHSS convened a committee over the course of the summer with a lot of input from different areas into what needs to be done to make the procedure more useable. He noted that with differentiating risks from different areas there will be differentiation in the procedures accordingly. It is now being reviewed at more senior levels now.

Dr. Agarwal reported that in the school of business the welcome orientation happens at the program level and that they had been very successful this year. He noted that the summer term revolves around developing plans for changes that were approved in the preceding academic year. In this case the MBA program implemented a major overhaul of MBA year-one curriculum that was approved last year. He said that the experience so far with onboarding and foundation modules have been received very positively. He also reported on the launch

of the new program EMBA in Digital Transformation which was approved last year. It attracted a first cohort of 20 students and all are very highly qualified.

Dr. Hayward reported that the Master of Biomedical Discovery and Commercialization and the M.Sc. in Child Life and Pediatric Psychosocial Care had launched this September. They have also received full approval of the new M.Sc. in Speech Language Pathology program which is on track to launch September 2017. She noted that the Faculty is in the second year of the grad student ambassador program. They welcomed 15 new ambassadors this year and there are 25 ambassadors total. Students who participated last year felt the whole program was very beneficial. The ambassadors will be participating in the program open house scheduled for the fall. Michael G. DeGroote scholarships were offered to 15 recipients. An extremely impressive group of individuals received competitive stable funding for their first two years and there is an option for a further two years. The Faculty will be holding the annual Research Plenary May 16th to 18th and Dr. Hayward welcomed people to participate. It is open to all FHS students and students from those programs affiliated with FHS as well as affiliated postdocs and individuals outside of faculty doing health-related research. The Faculty will be holding a CIHR application session to inform students what people are looking for in an application. On September 27th they will be holding an event where an academic and career coach will deliver a talk titled From Ph.D. to Life to discuss career options.

Dr. Swett reported that in May the Faculty of Humanities and SGS sent two grad students to Carleton for a conference on the future of Ph.D. in Humanities. There was a lot of discussion at the conference on solo-suffering during the Ph.D. as well as the relationship between supervisor and supervisee. She said that McMaster seems to be on point with a lot of topics that were under discussion and that a number of best practices discussed are already happening here. She noted that there were also some interesting projects specific to the Humanities, including MITACS-funded humanities projects. She also reported that the Faculty of Humanities is on track for introduction of a new Ph.D. in Communication Studies and Multimedia.

V. Report from the Associate Registrar and Graduate Secretary

Ms. Baschiera noted that her team was going through end of term and start of term processing. She was pleased to share that academic advisement was going live, starting with diploma programs. Next would be Masters and then Ph.D. She noted that this was a benefit of Mosaic and that at the graduate level there has never been a way to audit progress against degree requirements. A student who runs the academic advisement report will be able to see the requirements of the program they're in and their progress to date. She also reported that they have started the monthly town halls for anyone who is interested in attending from the program offices. These are intended to inform programs of what's on the horizon. They are also holding bi-weekly practical labs for administrators. She reported that the fall convocation is moving to a two-day format and that these are the ceremonies with the most graduate students.

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

Mr. Self reported that the supervisory relationship document previously reviewed by graduate council was now available on the SGS website. He also reported that they had hired two graduate writing consultants for a pilot. The consultants will provide 6 hours a piece of support to graduate students to help with their writing. He noted that this is not an editing service but is intended to give students the skills to help move along their writing. His team is working on more initiatives to support that writing piece and acknowledged that McMaster has a gap in this respect.

He reported that Graduate Welcome week had just happened and that 300 students were in attendance at their kick-off event. As part of this welcome week they also held a graduate student fair including internal and external services available to graduate students. The annual barbecue co-sponsored with the GSA was held again on the patio at the Phoenix. They also held graduate student awards which are the result of a number of awards promoted earlier in the summer. In partnership with a SPICES project an LGBTQ event was held at the Faculty Club. Another welcome week event was the international graduate student fair.

Coming up he reported that his team will be running another thesis writing boot camp. It's happening the 12th to 14th of October and 40 students have signed up. They also have an immigration session with a lawyer from Toronto which is a student run initiative with participation from the GSA. It will be the fifth or sixth time they've held it and the session provides thoughtful information about the best routes for people in different situations trying to gain PR status.

He noted that Valedictorian nominations are due by September 29th and urged anyone who has been outstanding to apply. They need three this year because of the new convocation configuration.

VII. Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities policy

Dr. Sue Baptiste presented the proposed new policy. She noted that the process for developing the accommodations policy has been going on for the last 18 months and that it is a very complex policy. It has been created against a backdrop of a very active Human Rights Commission. A number of dictates have been passed down by the Commission and with that in mind they looked at the old policy to see how it could be streamlined and to add what the Commission has asked to be added.

She said that there is now no requirement for students to disclose their diagnosis. This major shift for the Commission was instigated by a decision made around a York University student. Students may request interim accommodation with medical documents pending. The policy also makes it clear that temporary and permanent disabilities will be accommodated. They have to be constantly in touch with student with an accommodation and retroactive accommodation is possible. She noted that this has been a particular sticking

point, that there is a wide range of opinions on the table and that that section had been rewritten from what was in the document the council received.

In light of these changes Dr. Welch suggested that the council have the discussion and that Dr. Baptiste forward the revised policy to be approved at a later stage. Dr. Baptiste responded that the changes made are minor.

She also noted that the Commission has stated that this has to be approved by September. She acknowledged the issues around that but wanted to highlight the context of heavy-handedness that they're currently facing.

She explained that in the new policy students don't have to present a letter to the instructor anymore. This information will go to SAS and the program office. A council member asked how instructors will be informed.

Dr. Baptiste responded that the information would be communicated to instructors but that it would be managed in a different way than the current case. She noted that communication is critical.

She highlighted another notable change from the current policy – the new policy is overarching for the entire campus. In the past there had been four different sections and those are not there anymore. This did cause

some issues around trying to balance the need to be generic enough but also to ensure people understood how the policy was intended to work. The creation of the Campus Accommodation Team and the Academic Accommodation Oversight Committee are new.

The Campus Accommodation Team will be composed of someone from each of the educational units who are accountable for front-line accommodation processes.

The Academic Accommodation Oversight Committee is a committee from the Provost's office and will bring in resources from all services on campus who have direct applicability to accessibility requirements.

She noted that there is now a concept of good faith in the policy. If a student comes forward and appears to have pink-eye, there is no requirement to wait to send the student home until they have a medical certificate from somebody. Colds and flus are not included in this context.

She said that the new policy also includes guidelines for essential requirements which is another piece that is relatively new. They have created guidelines for considering essential requirements and experiential learning issues to be considered.

Dr. Baptiste noted that they're now in a position of completing the visits to the internal bodies for formal approval. They have met with the Assistant Deans, ADG group, and have appointments with UGC etc. She said they will finalize the document and send to senate for approval after these are done and noted that there had been a broad sweep of consultation.

Dr. Welch asked if Graduate Council was the first body of approval that they were seeking. Dr. Baptiste responded that it was the first formal approval. Dr. Welch said that he would have to insist that Graduate Council see the final policy that they're approving. He noted it was possible to handle it via e-ballot depending on what happened with the discussion at the meeting.

Dr. Hayward thanked Dr. Baptiste for her efforts to lead this policy change and noted a few issues to be corrected. There were some paragraphs duplicated. In Section 9 the second line referencing the Associate Deans should be removed because Assistant Deans are the program heads. Item 34 in the policy referenced a review of student accommodation plans that are not agreeable to students or acceptable to instructor; Dr. Hayward noted that it would primarily be the academic head of the program dealing with this and that changing this section to refer to them rather than the instructor would be appropriate.

She said that currently the Associate Dean is very involved in student accommodation plans, particularly when they get down to issues that may involve the academic integrity of this program. She thought that the Associate Dean was probably still the best person to navigate this but was open to the Campus Accommodation Team dealing with the cases initially provided the Associate Dean was still involved. Dr. Baptiste responded that it is currently very vague in the policy but it can be managed out in different ways. They made it as crisp as possible but there are different ways to operationalize what happens.

Dr. Hayward noted that in point 46 the word instructor appears there and suggested that perhaps it should be 'university programs.' A council member responded that this is actually a big change and asked for clarification on where the responsibility needs to be. Dr. Hayward suggested it could say university programs and faculty member perhaps. Dr. Welch agreed that the instructor is not the right person for the situation described in the header on point 46 but that in the sub-item 'A' the faculty member would be responsible.

Dr. Hayward said there was a lack of clarity on point 'F' and wondered how the Associate Dean would contact SAS to be involved. She also suggested a friendly amendment to section 91, noting that it didn't seem appropriate for students to contact SAS, associate dean's office and SGS. She suggested that their program be the first point of contact. Dr. Welch agreed that made sense.

Dr. Hayward noted at point 96 another instance where there is instructor of the course notifying the chair of the department. She thought that should be the program office. A council member responded that that depends on the circumstances. As an undergraduate instructor you wouldn't go straight to the associate dean's office. It would be the instructor making the decision. Dr. Hayward wondered if it could say 'program or instructor of the course as appropriate'. The council member noted that this point is concerned with who is upset with the accommodation and that that could be a variety of people in the program.

Dr. Hayward noted that in appendix A in the second paragraph there was a reference to Associate Dean that should be taken out. A council member responded that this might be the appropriate dean at the undergraduate level. Dr. Hayward said she thought the title would cause confusion. The council member suggested that it be more specific, noting Associate Dean Academic as appropriate. She also said that there were issues around whether it was appropriate to speak with the Associate Dean or department chair.

Dr. Baptiste responded that this is where the local context gets into play. The intent is that people will take the policy and make it work in individual contexts. They are working to make the policy as clean as they can and when people need help implementing it they will have resources.

Dr. Hayward noted that the first four paragraphs in appendix C included some duplication. With respect to the section on overall communication structure (second paragraph) she asked who the representative ensuring that the overall academic integrity is maintained was and suggested that this needed to be clarified.

Dr. Hayward also noted that on page 50 of the meeting package, the overview of the policy point e) that there is a lack of clarity about who is communicating what information. Dr. Baptiste responded that this is where, again, the local context becomes important. She also said that that was just an overview, not the policy itself.

Dr. Thompson had some concerns about using the policy as a legal document. He noted that there was a lot of the wording that seems too definite. He highlighted point 15 which states that McMaster recognizes that barriers exist and that changes to the policy are required. He said that reasonable accommodation is what McMaster is required to provide. Dr. Baptiste responded that the Commission does not see where there is any place that an accommodation could not be met. Reasonable accommodation is no longer a clear cut statement that can be used. Dr. Thompson responded that the AODA includes this statement. Dr. Baptiste agreed but has been charged with implementing what has been passed down by the Commission.

Dr. Thompson asked about the flow chart included. He noted that there was inclusion of university officials but no mention of what qualifications they might have. Dr. Baptiste responded that they no longer have to be medical professionals. There are other folks who might have qualifications but not the traditional kind. Dr. Thompson said he assumed they would have to have some credential. Dr. Baptiste responded that they would be allied health professionals. Dr. Thompson asked that clarification be added to the document.

Dr. Thompson asked a question about scope, noting that it seems to be focused on accommodating around courses. Dr. Baptiste responded that they are accommodating programs of study. He asked why volunteers, visitors and observers are listed in the document. Dr. Baptiste responded that the policy had been through three legal reviews and that because those folks can be part of a learning experience they should be accommodated under the policy. Dr. Thompson said this seemed too vague and that McMaster should only be looking after those to who the institution has a financial responsibility. Dr. Baptiste agreed to take it back to the lawyer.

Dr. Agarwal noted a lack of clarity in appendix D around retroactive accommodation and said that if the accommodation has been retroactively applied it needs to be clear what happens.

Dr. Thompson asked if university officers were defined as legal officers. Dr. Welch noted that there are already a group of people referred to as university officers. Dr. Thompson said that point 61 refers to healthcare professionals and university officers. Dr. Welch thought that it sounded like there was an 'R' in there that shouldn't be there and that it should read university offices.

A council member asked about student consultation on the development of the new policy. Dr. Baptiste responded that the MSU, GSA and MAPS were all invited to attend. Some never did but they received all of the minutes.

Dr. Welch said that since there are enough changes needed he assumed this would have to come back to the next meeting for approval and asked Dr. Hayward to withdraw her motion. She agreed.

VIII. Final Assessment Reports: Business Ph.D. and Computational Science and Engineering

Dr. Welch presented these for-information items and asked if there were any questions or comments.

IX. Scholarships Committee of Graduate Council

Dr. Welch noted that the scholarships committee structure was changed not this summer but the previous summer. It involves more people but the burden put on every person who contributed was much lower.

A council member said that there were a couple of minor corrections to be made and said they would send them along.

Dr. Swett moved and Dr. Thompson seconded, 'that Graduate Council approve the scholarship committee members as described in the document.'

The motion was carried.

Additional Item: New Scholarships and Scholarships Changes

Dr. Agarwal noted there was some text missing with the RJ Spence award on the scholarship changes document. A council member asked how interest was assessed with respect to some of the scholarship changes in the document. Dr. Agarwal responded that this information was typically advertised within their program and students noted their interest directly. He noted that in the past there had been a management information systems specialization which had since been removed which is part of the reason that the wording has been changed to note 'interested in' rather than 'specializing in'.

Dr. Agarwal moved and Dr. Sills seconded 'that Graduate council approve the new awards and changes to existing awards as provided in the documents.'

The motion was carried.

Dr. Welch said that the final thing he wanted to discuss was participation on three working groups of Graduate Council. SGS has received a communication from part-time graduate students who drew

attention to the fact that policies and potential supports related to part-time students have not changed in many years. Therefore, he would like to strike a working group to examine what other universities do, what McMaster does and doesn't do and what recommendations should be put forward to support part-time students. He noted that Dr. Porter and Peter Self will be on this group.

Dr. Welch said that last year Graduate Council had discussed the comprehensive exam. He would like to come to conclusion about how they are treated going forward. The way McMaster runs it is not the way it runs at all institutions. He noted that Dr. Thompson is part of CAGS which is considering the comprehensive exam this fall. Dr. Thompson will chair the working group. Drs. Swett and Grodek volunteered to participate. Dr. Hayward said that it would be good to have representation from each faculty. Dr. Welch agreed and suggested that the Associate Deans might be able to assist in getting participants.

The final working group is one dealing with program handbooks. He noted that it was a delicate balancing act between what the regulations are in the graduate calendar and how things actually work in the program and suggested that this would be a great one for grad students to be on. Mr. Nick Quinn volunteered to participate.

Dr. Welch said an email would be circulated asking for volunteers.