



School of Graduate Studies

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Graduate Council
October 18th, 9:30 am
GH 111

Present: Dr. D. Welch, Ms. S. Baschiera, Ms. C. Bryce, Dr. N. Agarwal, Dr. P. Swett, Dr. T. Porter, Dr. M. Thompson, Dr. B. Gupta, Ms. S. Ramsammy, Dr. D. Pelinovsky, Dr. B. Doble, Dr. L. Thabane, Dr. G. McClelland, Dr. A. Guarne, Dr. A. Dean. Ms. N. Shen, Dr. A. Sills, Mr. R. Narro Perez, Ms. AM. Dragomir, Ms. R. Estok, Dr. A. Kitai, Ms. H. Yousefi, Ms. A. Orasch, Dr. E. Badone, Dr. A. Fudge Schormans, Dr. E. Grodek

Regrets: Dr. S. McCracken, Dr. M. Verma, Dr. T. Adams. Dr. A. Deza

A G E N D A

I. Minutes of the meeting September 20th, 2016

The minutes of the meeting of September 20th, 2016 were approved on a motion by Dr. Sills, seconded by Dr. Gupta.

II. Business arising

There was no business arising.

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

Dr. Welch reported that the School of Graduate Studies had undergone a review; three graduate deans from comparable universities had come in to review. There was an opportunity for everyone who interacts with SGS to meet with reviewers and exchange information. He noted that the report was not in yet but it is already clear that an area they need to work on improving is the admissions process. To that end, the SGS admissions officers and two people from each faculty selected by the associate deans will form a working group to face challenges head on. The goal is to be simpler, more efficient and less onerous. Dr. Welch said that he would bring any changes that arise to Graduate Council.

Dr. Welch introduced a new member of the SGS team – Sally Ramsammy who started on October 3rd and will take on the role of Director of Finance. Ms. Ramsammy introduced herself. She noted that she was a CPA/CMA

and had worked in the private sector for 15 years before working at the University of Guelph for 4 years and then the University of Waterloo as Finance Officer.

Dr. Welch noted that at the previous meeting there was a question if interest was charged back in the days of MAC VIP – he said he couldn't find someone that had the answer. It was the case back in those days that all tuition was due on September 1st but there were arrangements intact to even out the flow of money that are no longer available. He said that things in terms of students receiving their funding has been much better this term.

Dr. Welch explained that the way that province funds graduate studies in Ontario involves counting only in-time, domestic, Masters and Ph.D. students. He said it has long been the case that international students should be funded and that it is the case that many other provinces fund international students at the same rate as domestic. He noted that there had been issues in the past with trying to bring this forward. Last year the Ministry announced that a fraction of the growth envelop could be used to charge domestic fees for international Ph.D. students. He said that while the move was welcome, the change was quite small as the number across all international Ph.D. students that could be funded this way was 15. It was unclear whether it would continue this year. This week, two weeks before government count, the university was told they could do the same thing. The 15 students were chosen by the associate deans and their faculty. The allocation to faculties was made on the basis of the fraction of international students in faculty with the proviso that each faculty got at least one. They are hopeful that this will be expanded in the future. He noted that it was politically safe in the sense that the university hasn't hit their domestic Ph.D. targets so nobody can claim a domestic student has been denied admission relative to international students.

Dr. Welch reported that SGS is going to hold another set of recruiting workshops with programs to help assist with recruitment overall. The particular focus on domestic Ph.D.s last year led to an increase of 20% over the previous year. He said the first of these workshops would be held in November and noted that they had been a great success in terms of sharing what programs had done at McMaster.

A council member asked if the BIU consideration was for the full course of an international students study. Dr. Welch responded that it was just one year and noted that there were issues surrounding this. For that reason they have chosen fourth year Ph.D. students who wouldn't naturally be entitled to funding in the subsequent year.

IV. Report from the Graduate Associate Deans

Drs. Porter, Swett, Thompson and Agarwal had nothing to report. Dr. Gupta noted that he had previously reported on a planned alumni event led by students within the Faculty of Science. After lots of planning they were not quite ready to hold it in October. They had a discussion and decided to postpone it to winter reading

week. He noted that the Financial Math program approved at GCPC and that the Faculty had another program in big data in very early stages.

V. Report from the Associate Registrar and Graduate Secretary

Ms. Baschiera had nothing to report.

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

Mr. Self followed up on a couple of items from the last meeting. He reported that 38 students had attended the Thesis Bootcamp. These students spent 3 days spent in the library working on moving their thesis forward. He acknowledged the contribution of the library as they provided full access to the Learning Commons on the second floor, which is a great space to work when it's quiet.

He noted that there was also a graduate study room on the 4th floor of Mills with key access for grad students and postdocs. Almost a thousand students over the last three years have utilized the space. He reported that there had been discussion on more designated quiet space.

His team helped to facilitate an immigration session where a lawyer came in to talk about issues surrounding immigration and permanent residency. Roughly 146 students attended the event.

He noted that his team provided quite a bit of new graduate student orientation in the fall and some in the winter. There was a suggestion that they do something in December, bearing in mind students with a January start, so they will be holding an event on December 15th and January 11th.

He also reported that coming up there will be an undergraduate student research poster session on November 3rd.

On November 15th there will be a session with Lawrence Hill in Celebration Hall. He will be discussing, in part, his experiences with the writing process and how it might help graduate students who are stuck on writing. He said that registration information would be going out shortly.

He also reported that 3 Minute Thesis registration would open on December 12th. An info session will be held on January 12th and they encourage any students who want to practice their pitch to join.

VII. CAGS Doctoral Dissertation Document

Dr. Welch noted that he was hoping that there would be a discussion topic at most graduate council meetings to get input on different issues. He came across the CAGS doctoral dissertation document and since they are promoting thoughtful responses to the document he brought it to the group for input.

Dr. Swett noted that she had sent around the little note to draw attention to page 6 of the CAGS document which contained a list of discussion questions. She noted that the questions were broken into the topics

(Content, Form and Evaluation) and said that in part what they're wondering is do we need to have stricter or looser guidelines around these items.

Dr. Porter commented that some of these considerations overlap with the issue of community engaged research and thought that there had been a lot of motion recently in identifying the elements of community engagement which can be elevated to research. He noted the important of drawing out the elements at the core of scholarly research.

A council member said that they have a fairly traditional thesis structure in engineering and wondered what has been happening in the Faculty of Humanities in terms of thesis innovation. Dr. Swett responded that the new Ph.D. in CMNCS has broadened their expectation in terms of what can be considered for the final thesis. Another council member involved in the development of the new Ph.D. expanded on this: she noted that many of her colleagues work in research creation, like video games or research installations that have a scholarly component. They have incorporated that as an option in the new Ph.D. There are three options for students to complete their thesis: a conventional dissertation, a sandwich thesis or a research creation model where they might produce something like a film or digital media product which would be accompanied by a conceptual framework. They created this having looked at a bunch of other programs within Canada. Going forward they envision students following some of these options. She noted that it wasn't raised as an issue by their external review team members or Quality Council. Dr. Thompson said that they have taken a step forward in terms of the thesis form but have also anchored it to a more traditional model with that conceptual document. He asked if they ever considered the research creation as a standalone option. The council member said that they had been relatively conservative and had based their decision on other models, all of which had a theoretical component. She suspected that was likely in part due to need for consistent evaluation criteria. A student needs to create product but also conceptualize it and explain it to the discipline.

Another council member commented that one of the challenges that they might run into is evaluation. She wondered if we have the capacity to evaluate these sorts of innovative projects.

Dr. Welch commented that the sandwich thesis was initially thrown out there as an option and the standards for it came later, particularly where individual contributions were concerned.

A council member highlighted the document where it noted that the traditional view of doctoral education has been analogous with an apprenticeship toward a guild membership. The member liked that the document acknowledged that this view had to be reconsidered in light of the shifting nature of the Ph.D. job market. The council member asked how the evaluation would work in relation to this concept for students who are not interested in research-intensive focus. He suggested it was important to look at the philosophical question of the goals of getting a Ph.D.

Another council member said they had been reading a lot lately about social and emotional learning. She said that 65% of kids who are entering grade school will obtain jobs that do not currently exist today. She noted that the way students are taught will need to change accordingly and will need to include an emphasis on empathy, creativity and collaboration.

A council member said that he had been pushing for SEPT to include a Ph.D. program. He thought that if the Ph.D. thesis model could be broadened, it would pull that sort of program into the realm of Ph.D. level work. Students could create technology and could work to integrate it into the broader world. Dr. Welch responded that McMaster does have the ability to change the regulations and that Graduate Council would be one of the fundamental groups who would vote on that. He noted that some universities don't have a defence. He said that McMaster always demand an artifact at the end of a Ph.D. student's course of study which seems pretty sensible but is perhaps not absolutely necessary.

A council member said that it is important to evolve with time and noted that academic institutions take a very long time to evolve. He suggested it was important to re-evaluate the whole process of how students are taught, particularly as students learn very different from how they used to. He noted that McMaster prides itself on collaboration but then students are evaluated as individuals. He suggested that faculty might need to go back and learn how to teach students in the context of the world that they live in.

Dr. Gupta commented that the degree is being awarded individually and so individual evaluation is important. He also noted the importance of being able to evaluate academic work critically after the fact to see if it was sound or flawed. He said that when things are more fluid, it can be more difficult to do this.

Dr. Agarwal commented that the key theme is flexibility. With respect to content and form McMaster already has, in varying degrees across faculties, flexibility. He noted an instance where he had chaired a Ph.D. defence from science where the candidate was disabled and the topic was adapting academic work to that setting and the thesis was extremely rigorously done. He said there is flexibility with content and form but not at the evaluation stage. He thought that the evaluation stage is where they need to look at whether there can be degrees of freedom that wouldn't dilute the quality or the academic rigour. This would correspond to the flexibility in content and form that already exists.

A council member said that there was interest in her program with more applied and community-based research. For example a student wanted to examine Hamilton institutions and Syrian refugees. Another wanted to review the sexist grammar of French language and how this translates to teaching in immersion schools. She wondered if there was flexibility in the current budget model to allow for supervision with people from other faculties. She said that in French they would like to be able to collaborate with colleagues in other faculties, social sciences for example and asked about regulations for an internal cotutelle.

Dr. Welch responded that the budget model doesn't really get expressed at the graduate level, even in terms of graduate teaching. That constraint is not currently an issue at least in one way. He said it certainly is possible for there to be supervision between departments/faculties by making the person an associate member of the department. In response to community engagement point he noted that the measurements about when something has been achieved in a thesis have generally been judged by sandwich or classical thesis but there have been times that they've produced a piece of music. He didn't see why there could be clear written guidelines to include community engagement as a metric to be evaluated.

A council member worried about changing the requirements and how much that related to educational inflation. In many cases, students are going to more school and still not getting a job. She said this might be another kind of unpaid internship where you produce something and get relatively little in return. Dr. Welch agreed that there could be a danger in being the flavour of the week, four years ago. Dr. Porter responded that this was a good point and that there's always pressures to turn graduate education to a more vocational aspect.

Dr. Welch commented that it seems that there needed to be some sort of process to think about the things associated with any sort of change in an orderly fashion and then identify some of these traditional barriers. He asked if the focus should be on the evaluation, scope of thesis, or making regulations more flexible.

A committee member responded that a lot of what's been suggested as points for consideration are things that may be done in other faculties. He suggested that it would be easier for the programs to evaluate what is appropriate for their discipline and noted the importance of asking them how they're doing business and to decide whether they need retraining to evaluate students properly.

Dr. Porter said it might be useful to do a survey to see what departments are already doing, what they would like to be doing and if they are constrained by current regulations. Dr. Welch responded that the associate deans should take it back to their programs.

Dr. Swett said it would be useful to actually look at our own regulations. Dr. Welch said that's something that can be done as a follow up, perhaps for discussion at the next meeting of graduate council.

A council member noted that they agreed about the importance of department level consideration.

Dr. Welch said that whatever the decision is made needs to be clear and easily interpreted.

Dr. Thompson asked if there were any governmental level edicts that McMaster needed to be concerned with. Dr. Welch responded that the university proposes what they'd like to do, including program learning outcomes, Quality Council and MTCU review and then approve. Dr. Thompson asked if there was a boundary, from Quality Council for example, for these sorts of changes that could be looked up to assist in decision making. Dr. Welch

responded that it was mainly a McMaster boundary and that as an institution there was a lot of space to make the degrees the way the institution wants them to be.

A council member said at Senate that the president had talked about how colleges are serving the needs of the community better than universities and noted that in that context McMaster can't go wrong to see how it can align with what the rest of the world expects from a universities.

A council member asked if they're going to survey departments (and agreed this was a good idea) shouldn't students also be surveyed to see if this would be a deciding factor in entry to a program. Dr. Welch responded that he didn't disagree with the need for student input but suggested that a meeting within faculties might be more appropriate. There's a lot of surveys going out to students and he wanted to make sure they weren't over-surveyed.

Dr. Swett asked if there were any concern from SGS reviewers about what McMaster does for the Ph.D. Dr. Welch responded that they were reviewing SGS in a different context and didn't expect to hear any input from them on that.

VIII. QAC Membership

Dr. Welch explained that QAC is the internal body that oversees quality assurance at McMaster. Drs. Bradley Doble, Dmitry Pelinovsky and Adrian Kitai are the GC members. A council member asked how they were chosen and why the names hadn't been listed in the package. Dr. Welch responded that six members were chosen between undergraduate and graduate council to ensure that there as coverage from all six faculties. He said that the names of QAC members would be included in the agenda going forward.

Dr. Sills moved and Dr. Gupta seconded, 'that Graduate Council approve the Graduate Council members of the Quality Assurance Committee.'

The motion was carried.

IX. Fall 2016 Graduands

A council member asked if the list of graduands could be sent electronically in the future. Dr. Welch agreed. Dr. Thabane moved and Dr. Swett seconded,

'that Graduate Council approve the list of the 2016 Fall Graduands, with amendments/corrections to be made as necessary by the Associate Graduate Registrar.'

The motion was carried.