



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 17th, 9:30 am
GH 111

Present: Dr. D. Welch, Ms. S. Baschiera, Ms. C. Bryce, Mr. P. Self, Dr. T. Porter, Dr. T. Adams, Dr. A. Deza, Dr. G. McClelland, Mr. R. Narro Perez, Mr. N. Quinn, Ms. V. Bertram, Dr. A. Fudge Schormans, Ms. S. Ganeshan, Ms. M. Badv, Dr. B. Doble, Dr. B. Ibhawoh, Dr. S. O'Brien, Dr. B. Gupta, Dr. N. Agarwal, Dr. L. Thabane, Dr. M. Thompson, Dr. C. Hayward, Ms. V. Lewis

Regrets: Dr. S. McCracken, Dr. A. Dean, Dr. A. Sills, D. E. Badone, Dr. A. Guarne

By invitation: Mr. S. Van Koughnett

A G E N D A

I. Minutes of the meeting December 6th, 2016

The minutes of the meeting of December 6th were approved on a motion by Dr. Gupta, seconded by Dr. Agarwal.

II. Business arising

There was no business arising.

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

Dr. Welch welcomed back Dr. Ibhawoh to his role as Associate Dean of Humanities. He noted that there was good news to report on the grad pay front again. The lump sum payments for research scholarships and scholarships have been released into student accounts a week earlier than the proposed deadline. TA pay continues to come out biweekly.

On the admissions front Dr. Welch noted that as a result of the SGS Review (where a bottleneck was noted in the Admissions area) there is one more long term person in admissions. The position has since been advertised and filled and as of January 23, Jessica Dorsch will be starting in Admissions and leaving her role in Grad Thesis. Thesis will be backfilled by someone who has worked in SGS before and the position itself is being redesigned to focus on Records. Another Admissions change this year is that every single faculty has a single point person in Admission and Records to discuss any issues.

Dr. Welch highlighted an article that had appeared in the Globe and Mail about the changes in the landscape of graduate program development that's occurring. He suggested this was old news for people at the university

level as the provincial government has been very clear that over the last few years that programs need to be new and not duplicating programs elsewhere. The Strategic Mandate Agreements (SMA) have carved out where universities could grow and which new program proposals would receive expedited approval. He noted that a new round of SMAs were being negotiated. The whole work of defining growth areas has yet to be defined by negotiation of the university with the ministry. For the time being McMaster is moving forward and treating things as they were. The business of how much room they have to grow with respect to funding is as yet undetermined. That is something that will be worked out with the university by the Provost and President in negotiation with the province. The Provost has been asked directly whether we should encourage program development and attempt to grow graduate numbers this year and he has said yes so the path is clear.

A council member asked about grad pay. He noted that the last pay for the calendar year was December 23rd and the first time students receive funding in 2017 is January 20th. He noted that this breaks with the payday on January 6th which other staff get and said he didn't realize that there was going to be a month without funding. He noted this was a change from other terms where there was no waiting period and asked why this was the case. Dr. Welch responded that he didn't know the immediate answer but that the paydays that were listed for people in their funding letter were correct, as far as he knew. He suggested it may be desirable to rework in the future but at least it was known ahead of time. He agreed to look into it.

Dr. Welch noted that one of the themes of Graduate Council this academic year was examining assumptions and long term practices at McMaster. Part of this work is examining the bedrock of what a Ph.D. is and what makes sense going forward and there are a number of initiatives related to this. He highlighted a meeting that the Faculty of Engineering had organized around reimagining the Ph.D.

IV. Report from the Graduate Associate Deans

Dr. Hayward reported on a number of new programs in development within the Faculty of Health Sciences, including Masters in Clinical Life Sciences and Clinical Behavioural Sciences. The Global Health Ph.D. proposal is being refined before making its way through the formal levels of approval. She also reported that there have been meetings with programs to discuss recruitment strategies and that research intensive programs are trying to connect students with supervisors while students are at the undergraduate level to ensure they make the right connection for graduate programs. She also noted that the Faculty had held a reception for the Michael DeGroot Scholarships for Excellence.

Dr. Thompson noted that, as Dr. Welch mentioned, the Faculty of Engineering is holding a retreat consistent with the theme at CAGS: reimagining the Ph.D. They're very enthusiastic about what they're seeing. Speakers are really diving into this topic and taking it on themselves to help develop something new. There are a number of different folks attending including a CTO to provide a business perspective, Susan Porter from UBC, who is a leader in Canada around asking what a Ph.D. should entail, as well as McMaster's own experts, Dr. Welch and

Dr. Puri. He hoped to be able to report back interesting results. Dr. Thompson also noted that he had been chairing a working group of Graduate Council looking at the comprehensive examination. They're planning on bring a report forward to the next meeting of graduate council. He provided a high-level synopsis: the group has ultimately decided that the comprehensive has value within the institution but the group doesn't think that the School of Graduate Studies needs to define what form it should take. The main recommendation is a proposal to reword the section of the graduate calendar related to the comprehensive exam. The hope is that this will open up dialogue for programs who want to adjust or change. The other main recommendation is that at some point soon SGS should hold a retreat or workshop and invite as many programs who wish to come to discuss best practices.

A council member commented that the group felt strongly that SGS doesn't need to proscribe how comprehensive knowledge is assessed. The group strongly emphasized the need for comprehensive knowledge but thought that how programs examine for this will be up to them.

Dr. Thompson said that the working group would be pulling together a full document and providing an example of section 4 of the Graduate Calendar. They're hoping they can initiate more discussion and see if there's a willingness to accept the changes.

The council member commented that looking at the future of the Ph.D. is an initiative that all faculties and programs should be doing to see what aspects of the Ph.D. are relevant.

Dr. Welch commented that changes to the comprehensive exam would have to go to the different faculties, Graduate Council and Senate.

Dr. Agwaral noted that the MBA program is a two year program offered in three modes, full time students, co-op and part time. Last year the year 1 curriculum of the MBA program was overhauled and implemented this year. So far the change has been very successful and they've received a lot of positive feedback. However, the new curriculum cannot be taken on a part time basis as it is a cohort and team-based learning model. As part of transitional arrangements for part time students already enrolled they're maintaining the old year one curriculum. Work is underway to look at the possibility of developing alternate curriculum for year one part time students.

Dr. Porter reported that the School of Social Work is putting together a handbook for teaching assistants, clarifying their role as graduate students and teaching assistants.

Dr. Gupta reported that the Faculty of Science has been conducting a TA review process to see how they're being utilized. This review started about a year ago. A preliminary draft of the findings has been prepared. Ultimately the information will be passed along to department chairs, including recommendation about how TAs can be best utilized.

Dr. Welch noted that Dr. Maureen McDonald will be the new Dean of Science, starting on May 1st.

Dr. Ibhawoh commented on the launch of the new Ph.D. in Communication Studies, New Media and Cultural Studies developed within the Faculty of Humanities. He noted that it had gone through pretty quickly and noted that the expedited nature of this approval spoke to the importance of program alignment with the SMA. Dr. Welch confirmed that this is important. He said that all of the new programs that McMaster has put forward have been approved for expedited approval. He acknowledged that this was partially due to the fact that programs are generating really strong proposals and partially thanks to the work done by Stephanie and Christina. The proposals have been packaged in a way that is cognizant of how the Ministry is reviewing them and McMaster will continue to do that.

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

Mr. Self reported that his team had held a new graduate student orientation in December for students who had arrived prior to the start of term. This was done in response to a suggestion that came out of the graduate student advisory group. They held a second orientation on January 11th which included folks from a number of areas including the GSA, SGS, Library, Accessibility and International Student Services.

He noted that they had been offering an ESL course for a number of years and had reworked it a little bit, particularly in light of the fact that there is always more demand than access. The course will now be offered an hour a night for one month as a pilot.

He noted that the SPICES application had just gone live and explained that SPICES provides an opportunity for grad students to create programming. It isn't meant to supporting things that are already in place.

He noted that they had used Facebook promotion for the Harvey Longboat award with the intent of reaching a broader audience.

He reported that the next thesis boot camp was running from February 22nd to 24th and would take place in the Learning Commons in the library.

He noted that another service SGS is offering is graduate writing consultants. Two individuals are offering 45 minute appointments, booked through OSCAR plus.

He reported that 3MT was coming up on Feb 23rd and that registration was already open. They had recently held an information session which 25 students attended. He noted that there seems to be a perception that

3MT is only for STEM disciplines. They're trying to get the message out that it's about ideas and talking about research and that it doesn't have to have a specific outcome from a lab setting.

He said that they were working on a new module for My Grad Skills around indigenous knowledge and research.

Dr. Welch noted that this foray into Facebook advertising, following on work already done in FHS, is something they hope to use more in the future. The current promotion is a test of how it will work and the Longboat award is a good test case. Mr. Self said that their plan was to run it for four weeks and then they would be trying it with a fellowship.

A council member commented on the perception that 3MT is only for students doing lab research. He wondered whether one of the strategies would be to hold the competition in phases: first there would be a winner in each Faculty and then from there they would all go onto the next phase. Mr. Self responded that a number of universities are going that way. They would like to do that here at McMaster but there needs to be a bit more buy in from the faculties. He suggested they would work on it.

VII. Update on Mental Health Initiatives

Dr. Welch noted that at the previous meeting there was a request for an update on graduate mental health initiatives and introduced Sean Van Koughnett.

Mr. Van Koughnett noted that mental health generally and specifically that of graduate students has been a matter of great concern and difficulty as they try to wade through the issues. He provided a background to the current situation, noting that Student Wellness provides number of services including medical and mental health services. The Centre has faced escalating demand on all fronts, including mental health services. He said that funding comes from a number of different areas: first, physicians charge through OHIP (but OHIP hasn't increased rates), second the university provides a subsidy (which was just increased so that the centre will break even), the third source of funding is ancillary fees. This third fee is central to graduate student issues. The Centre has added positions to the point where they didn't have money to fund them. There is a differential between what graduates and undergraduates were paying through their ancillary fees: undergraduates were paying three times the amount that graduate students were paying. Graduate students only paid \$30 a year and at \$10 per term, it's very difficult to provide services.

He noted that the MSU brought forward the issue of equity, particularly in light of the fact that undergraduate students use the services less. As a result of all of this they have been talking to the GSA to work through the issues. They got a proposal together that the GSA approved. After this approval they held a referendum based on the proposal to make funding equal. This proposal was voted down. This additional funding would have allowed Student Wellness to add a couple of mental health professionals.

After the first referendum they delayed any action and the level of service provided to graduate students remained unchanged. There was a desire from the GSA to hold the referendum again. So, they brought it back again in April 2016 along with a proposal to establish a fee for career services within SGS. Both fees were turned down very narrowly, by only five votes in the case of mental health services. After this second referendum the service offered did change and now graduate students can still access psychiatrists and physicians but not counsellors.

He reported that there is interest in bringing the proposal back again and they met with the GSA last week. There is some optimism that there are now more students informed and awake to the issues and that perhaps this time will be successful. He noted that it was difficult for everyone involved, particularly those impacted by having fewer counsellors available. After the second referendum graduate students already in counselling were transitioned out into the community.

He noted that they are exploring other avenues and that campus wellness centres at different institutions are also struggling with resources and that there is not a good funding model available at the moment. They have been advocating with the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care but it has been a challenge to get on the radar of this ministry, rather than MAESD.

He noted that the MSU has agreed that if there's a positive vote in March or April, counselling will start again in May.

A council member commented that he realized it's a tough issue and asked how other institutions funded these centres. Mr. Van Koughnett responded that it varied, some are similar to what McMaster does and some universities funded more. He noted that funding at the University of Waterloo is higher in this area but, consequently, lower in others. They did a survey and found that McMaster is in the ballpark in terms of what other universities are doing.

The council member asked how difficult it would be to have this embedded within the fee increase in a way that seems seamless to students. Mr. Van Koughnett responded that they wouldn't be able to tag it onto tuition because of ministry policies. He also said that they want to be as transparent as possible.

Another council member asked about the principle between trying to equalize pay between undergraduate students and graduate students, noting that graduate students bring it more resources like BIU, TA. She was not sure why it should be equal amount. Mr. Van Koughnett responded that it was a good question and that it was certainly a debate they could have. On the undergraduate side they're looking at what they're getting for what they're paying and the fact that graduate students used the services at 1.5 times the rate of undergraduate studies while paying less was hard to reconcile. He noted that they could have that philosophical debate but they've been focused more narrowly on the fee they're paying for.

The council member noted that there fewer graduate students. Mr. Van Koughnett responded that that has been used to justify the other side of the argument, noting that at the level graduate students contribute,

without the money that undergraduates contribute they'd be able to offer minimal service at best. He acknowledged that the contribution of graduate students to campus is important and wished that the model was different. The council member commented it was a brutal model, noting that graduate work is profoundly intellectual work and that there can be mental health issues related to this.

Mr. Van Koughnett said that there had been a discussion ongoing with his counterparts to consider what the educational institutions level of responsibility was in this respect. Services provided in this area means money is taken from another area. Boundaries is another real challenge as they have situations where someone is coming in every week or day for care. These folks can supplant those who have more minor issues but also need care.

A council member commented that it's a slippery slope to compare the place of graduate students to undergrads. He said this can generate conflict between graduate and undergraduate students and that this difference shouldn't be part of the rhetoric. Everyone concerned is a student, regardless of what kind of education they're going through.

Dr. Hayward noted that user fees don't exist in Canada and wondered if the issues discussed were a symptom of a bigger problem with respect to how fees are harmonized for central services. Mr. Van Koughnett responded that there's a ministry policy dating back to 1994 before which universities were arbitrarily charging fees without consulting students groups. Now there is a compulsory ancillary fee agreement which governs this. He noted that institutions can increase fees at the rate of inflation but if you want to go over inflation you have to go to a referendum. Wage increases and escalating demand for service have gone beyond inflation but increasing the fee in this case would not lead to more services, so it's hard to sell.

He noted that the fee was set low initially and that they can only increase in very small amounts but demand is increasing dramatically. They're trying to put in place a new model for these increases, without having to put it to a referendum when the increases are not exorbitant. This would at least allow them to maintain what they're doing. Increases above a certain percent would still have to go to referendum. They would like to do something like this with grad students and are working to try to change some of the systemic problems.

Dr. Hayward noted funding constraints that existing within the healthcare system generally as well as the importance of determining what level of care was appropriate in a wellness centre and expected that they would have a crisis management team to connect more serious cases with community services. Mr. Van Koughnett responded that they did have this and that waiting periods fluctuate. The response they'd received from the Ministry for Health and Long term Care was that there were demands elsewhere and that the Ministry was trying to wrestle with, in their minds, greater challenges. He said his team was trying to make a case for caring for the young population here to avoid cascade effects in other communities.

A council member had a couple of questions about the referendum itself and asked what kinds of conversations had happened around the ethics of allowing the provision of service to a minority of students to be determined by a majority vote.

Mr. Van Koughnett responded that he wasn't sure that they got into the ethics of it. He agreed that it was extremely difficult and noted that there was no other solution that was suggested.

The council member asked a follow up, noting that they're hoping that another referendum would be successful and the assumption is that previous referendums failed because graduate students were insufficiently informed, and wanting to know if the university would continue the current policy if they vote no again.

Mr. Van Koughnett responded, based on conversations that he had had with the GSA, that they thought that part of the issue was the fact that nothing was changed between the first two votes and that the CUPE negotiations may have also complicated matters. He said they would be in the same situation if the referendum fails again and reiterated that graduate students can still see psychiatrists and physicians, just not counsellors.

A council member asked if they are able to refer these students off campus. Mr. Van Koughnett responded that they do. When students come to the front desk, if they're in a crisis situation they'll see a physician. They've built strong connections to the community but there are waitlists everywhere. The council member asked for confirmation that he could still refer his students to student wellness. Mr. Van Koughnett responded that he could, but asked him to pass along the understanding around access to counsellors.

A council member asked if they had actually surveyed graduate students with mental health issues to see what they need to help inform steps going forward and noted that this group may have other suggestions that could be investigated. Mr. Van Koughnett responded that they hadn't done it but it was worth considering. Another council member commented that the GSA did a survey which laid out the options for students. They had a high response rate. He noted the survey also talked about peer to peer programming that the GSA is going to work on. The council member asked if that went to graduate students in general and suggested it be geared toward graduate students with mental health issues. Council members discussed the logistics of this and one council member noted that there was a substantial amount of self-identification in the general survey.

Dr. Welch recognized the importance of this issue and noted that because of the vote on career services, a position had to be terminated. These votes do have consequences. He said that the GSA and Mr. Van Koughnett were working as hard as they can for a positive outcome.

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

Dr. Hayward explained that the School of Rehabilitation Sciences offers professional programs in Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy, as well as a doctoral program in Rehabilitation Science. The proposal is to create a pathway to coordinate the students' ability to do both degrees in a coordinated way. Both degrees have individual requirements. The proposal is not a new program but a different way to divide time between professional program and Ph.D. If a student is unsuccessful in one degree, they would still be able to do the other degree per university policies.

Dr. Hayward moved and Dr. Gupta seconded, 'that Graduate Council approve the proposed changes as described in the documents.'

The motion was carried.

Dr. Hayward noted that there was also a change to course title and description and a new cross-listed course for information.

IX. Change to Scholarship Committee Membership

Dr. Deza moved and Dr. Porter seconded, 'that Graduate council approve the change to Scholarship Committee membership as noted in the document.'

The motion was carried.

X. New Scholarships

Dr. Hayward moved and Dr. Porter seconded, 'that Graduate Council approve the proposed new scholarships as described in the document.'

The motion was carried.

XI. School of Graduate Studies Review

Dr. Welch noted that as discussed at the previously meeting a copy of the review is in the meeting package. He said that SGS had already undertaken a number of actions based on this review and that some recommendations will require the attention of newly-appointed Dean of Graduate Studies.

XII. Other Business

Dr. Welch asked Vivian Lewis to provide an update. Ms. Lewis reported on a series of workshops being offered by the Sherman Centre for Digital Scholarship called Demystifying Digital. She noted that they offered sessions on a number of different topics including building data sets with social media, building web forums and GIS. She noted that what is being offered is very practical skills training.