



School of Graduate Studies

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Graduate Council  
April 18<sup>th</sup> 9:30 am  
GH 111

Present: Dr. D. Welch, Ms. S. Baschiera, Ms. C. Bryce, Dr. T. Porter, Dr. C. Hayward, Dr. B. Gupta, Dr. B. Ibhawoh, Dr. M. Thompson, Dr. N. Agarwal, Dr. S. McCracken, Dr. T. Adams, Dr. A. Deza, Dr. A. Kitai, Dr. B. Doble, Dr. L. Thabane, Ms. M. Badv, Mr. R. Narro Perez, Dr. E. Grodek, Dr. S. O'Brien, Dr. G. McClelland, Dr. A. Sills, Dr. A. Fudge Schormans, Dr. E. Badone

Regrets: Dr. M. Verma, Dr. I. Marwah, Dr. D. Pelinovsky, Ms. R. Estok

By Invitation: Mr. S Van Koughnett, Ms. A. Drew Hassling, Ms. M. Bennett Dr. E. Mohamed, Ms. T. Long, Ms. T. Bates

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## A G E N D A

### **I. Minutes of the meeting March 21st, 2017**

The minutes of the meeting of March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2017 were approved on a motion by Dr. Agarwal, 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 passed along the news that the vote on the referendum for the increase in mental wellness fees had passed by a 2 to 1 margin. He noted that Sean Van Koughnett was in attendance and could speak to it.

Mr. Van Koughnett said that he was thankful the issues that he had discussed at Graduate Council in January had been resolved. They had worked closely with GSA who decided they want to bring it back to a vote. Part of what the success came down to is that there an education piece that seemed to take hold in the latter stages. He noted that the service isn't free but when students looked at the numbers it seemed like they would get good value. On average the services were accessed 6 times. The 72 dollar increase would mean that each appointment would cost 12 dollars. He said that first time appointments are normally the same day. Accessing services outside the university would potentially cost much more money and involve long wait periods. The consensus was that this was a good solution. He said that even though the fee doesn't kick in until September,

the MSU has agreed to open up counselling as of May 1<sup>st</sup>. The funding will allow them to hire a couple of more mental health staff – approximately 2000 more hours of help will be available. Dr. Welch thanked everyone involved for their efforts.

Dr. Welch also reported that McMaster is working towards its second Strategic Mandate Agreement and that the first draft was being submitted that week. He noted that it had become clear that graduate allocation is one of the keys going forward and that there had been some signals from the province that they understand this. The next round of negotiation is in May.

Dr. Welch reported that the federal science review has been made public this month and that there has clearly been a commitment to make sure that the Harper-era elimination plan is no longer the theme. He recommended reading it and noted that it was a good signal all around in terms of support for fundamental research.

He also provided an update on admissions, noting that it has always been a trial in the new system. He reported that Ms. Baschiera had been leading a group of people to get it right in Mosaic. They have operationalized part of the referee section of the admissions module and have worked it through with a number of the graduate administrators. Everyone seems pleased. He noted that it would not actually be in place until September along with other developments. The changes will dramatically reduce the number of unneeded interactions and therefore dramatically improve interactions when they need to happen. In terms of the existing system and work arounds and additional admissions person they have been able to keep to very close to up to date on offers. At this point in time for Domestic Ph.D. applications they are 50% ahead on acceptances which is a very good sign.

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

There were no reports.

#### **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. Academic Accommodation Policy**

Mr. Van Koughnett noted that the process for revisions to the policy started two years ago. He commended Sue Baptiste, Allison Drew-Hassling and Michelle Bennet for their work on the policy. The document shows the process that it had gone through for revisions. The last revision to the policy was in 2003, when mental health

accommodations weren't on the radar. The old policy also didn't discuss experiential learning. The Human Rights Commission has chimed in to show what they would like to see in this policy. He noted the tension on this issue and said that in light of that he was sure that it would continue to evolve. They have committed to looking at it in a year's time to see how everything is working. One of the challenges is that accommodation can be very case-specific. They set a framework in the policy in which to allow academic units to navigate through these cases.

Dr. Sue Baptiste noted that there had been a huge learning curve with the development of the policy. They have designed the policy to literally end at the point of the school/program/faculty so that they can take over and deal with it at that stage. There has been some feedback about what the accommodations team looks like. She said that it could be whatever works for the unit in question.

Dr. Hayward noted that it was a much more improved version. One of the big changes that she saw in was the non-valued added parts of the process for associate deans had been removed. She noted the need for a minor edit on page 18 of the policy, as there was a duplicate reference on number 6. She suggested it would also be worthwhile to make friendly amendment to make a note of who is communicating the accommodation plan.

Dr. Thompson requested an edit under the guidelines point 34 a) on page 8 where it said students are not required to seek accommodations directly from professors. He wanted to remove the word 'required'. He noted that someone with good intentions could offer accommodations, and can set a precedent that is hard to unwind in these cases. It should be very forceful to really directing student to SAS. Mr. Van Koughnett responded that that particular wording was a requirement of the human rights commission. Ms. Bennett noted that the second sentence could be changed. Dr. Welch agreed with Dr. Thompson noting that it could cause confusion people who are trying to do the right thing but those that don't understand the consequences. He said it could be phrased more positively to say 'students seeking accommodation from their professors, TA etc. should be directed to SAS.' Ms. Drew-Hassling suggested that they also add 'faculty office' to articulate there are two pathways.

Mr. Van Koughnett said that the faculty offices wouldn't want certain types of accommodation to go to SAS. Ms. Bennett said that if that change is made it will also need to be reflected in 22 a) referring to all accommodation requests.

Council members discussed students going to SAS versus the faculty office. Dr. Welch noted that Faculty Offices tend to have some appropriate training to assist. Ms. Bennet said it should be noted that anyone with a

permanent disability is supposed to go to SAS. Temporary and retroactive accommodations can be handled by the Faculty Office. Dr. Porter asked if graduate students would also go to the faculty office. Ms. Bennett responded that the School of Graduate Studies would be the faculty office and that in the definitions section it clarifies that graduate students are directed to the associate dean in SGS.

A council member noted that currently there are issues with the availability of simple accommodations like a note taker. He asked whose responsibility it is if an accommodation can't be met as it seems it is often a problem and wondered if this should be articulated in the policy. Mr. Van Koughnett responded that policy is one thing implementation is another and that escalating demand always creates challenges.

A council member suggested that to ensure clarity 34 a) and 22 a) should be edited to find a way to include teaching assistants.

A council member asked about confidentiality and whether or not in a department meeting, if a student accessibility issue comes up, they were allowed to discuss as a group. Ms. Bennett responded that they would have to justify the need to discuss it in that context and anonymize it as best they can. She noted that the need for accommodation shouldn't be discussed at departmental level and should only be discussed with those directly affected.

Dr. Agarwal asked about the role of SAS in retroactive accommodations and noted that there was no reference to an accommodation plan. Mr. Van Koughnett responded that retroactive accommodations are primarily requests to have an adjustment to a mark/course. Academic decisions that lay within the academic unit. Dr. Baptiste said that if it turns into a long term accommodation, SAS would get involved. Ms. Bennett noted that with retroactive accommodation it's after the fact, going back and correcting a record and that the contextual piece matters (ie. how soon after the event they sought accommodation). The faculty office can still work with SAS about whether the functional limitations would warrant accommodation. As far as accommodation plans are concerned they're for accommodations going forward. She noted that the Graduate and Undergraduate Calendars would have to be adjusted to include the requirements for retroactive accommodations.

Dr. Hayward asked for clarification on the paperwork that would get submitted, asking if it would still come in as a petition for special consideration. Ms. Bennett responded that some information could stay in the same form but that some additional documentation will be created, creating a standard for retroactive accommodations. She also noted that petitions will stay in the calendar but that adjustments will be needed to both calendars once the policy is approved.

Dr. Agarwal commented that there are some academic programs that have a co-op work term or internships and asked how accommodations would be handled there. Dr. Baptiste responded that there is a section there referring to off-site work and how to deal with these situations.

Dr. Porter noted that, as an associate dean, if he received a request for retroactive accommodation he would consult with SAS if that should be accommodated and asked if this correct. Dr. Baptiste responded that for retroactive accommodations they are articulated by the student first, go to faculty office, then it can go through SAS to build a plan if a long term accommodation is required. She said it's a mutual thing with all offices and the student working together. Ms. Drew-Hassling said the discretion is upon the individual about how they engage SAS in that case. Retroactive is a historical issue and the student may have not even registered with SAS. They can ask SAS to assist with context but each situation can be different. Dr. Porter asked if associate deans should be reviewing documentation. Ms. Drew-Hassling responded that they could review documentation that supports the application for retroactive accommodation.

A council member noted some language around retroactive accommodation where it states the student was 'unaware' of the need for accommodation at the time and asked how someone could determine if a student was unaware. Dr. Welch responded that this is an area where there isn't a clear answer but that this is also an area where the province has decided that the need exists and that the institution has to find a way to address these kinds of accommodations. There will never be full certainty on any decisions that have to be made but it really boils down to whether the process is optimal for trying to make the right decisions. Dr. Baptiste noted that they are developing an implementation where people will report on problems they have.

Dr. Welch said that this is something that graduate deans are discussing frequently and that they are very good about sharing experience and best practices.

A council member asked for more detail about the academic accommodations teams role and how they come into play. Dr. Baptiste responded that the term is meant to incorporate a number of contexts and that the group should be made up of people who can support and make decisions. The Faculty of Health Sciences already has a committee they will utilize. Others may find one person is particularly keen to be involved. The council member asked if each Faculty will have to have an academic accommodations team. Dr. Baptiste responded that they will have to have a go-to person or team.

A council member asked if how students will students be aware of that person. Another council member asked if it would be at the Faculty or Departmental level. Dr. Baptiste responded it will be up to the Faculty to decide. The council member noted some concern with the vagueness and that there could be confusion about responsibility. Dr. Baptiste responded that it would be up to the supervisor and accommodations person to clarify. They can provide insight and receive updates from commission. Ms. Bennett responded that the accommodation team is there is a resource for the decision maker. They're there to provide knowledge and expertise and would not be dealing directly with students.

The council member asked if they can be specified within the document. Dr. Baptiste responded that that's the application of the policy, not the policy itself and it would be too much detail to go into there. Ms. Bennett noted that it does say in the policy that it's an informal network. They will complement SAS and support associate deans. It says that they're not decision makers.

Dr. Welch said that this is the sort of policy where there is some level of discomfort in our lack of experience. Dr. Baptiste reiterated that the team is working on an implementation plan and that they'll take all of this into account.

A council member commented that at the graduate level petitions are handled at the department level, which she thought was easiest and most efficient for students. She said that for graduate students it seems like a level of bureaucracy is being added because instead of going to the department they're going to the associate dean. She thought that temporary accommodations are already dealt with quite well at department level. Dr. Welch suggested that this was a different interpretation. The petition does indeed have what a student writes on it and the perspective of supervisor and chair but it is still the associate dean that makes decisions. There have been many instances where associate deans have made a decisions other than what was suggested. The council member said that the interface is different. Student will have to go to the associate dean instead of the department and noted the importance of structure. Dr. Welch responded that yes that would be the case but he would be surprised if they associate dean didn't check in with the department. Ms. Bennett noted that students don't have to disclose information to chair or instructors.

Dr. Hayward moved and Dr. Thompson seconded, 'that Graduate Council approve the policy as set out in the document, with the revisions requested.'

The motion was carried.

## **VIII. Senate Policy on Diplomas and Certificates**

Ms. Baschiera explained that the old policy was silent with respect to graduate certificates. It now speaks to the different types of graduate diplomas and refers to IQAP policy for actual approval process for these diplomas. The certificates part is biggest change at the graduate level. They will be a minimum of three courses and can be part of another degree, counted towards both. She noted this is separate from IQAP which still address new programs and diplomas.

A council member asked about Water Without Borders and asked how a graduate certificate like that would be done with a partner institute. Ms. Baschiera responded that Water Without Borders is a diploma and noted that certificates are intended at the graduate level to highlight a competency.

Dr. Gupta moved and Dr. Hayward seconded, 'that Graduate Council approve the policy as set out in the document, conditional on the approval of Undergraduate Council'

The motion was carried.

#### **IX. University Aid and Awards Policy**

Ms. Baschiera explained that this policy has been revised to harmonize the approach to student awards between undergraduate and graduate processes. It outlines the high level governance of how they're approved and specific award information will be outlined separately for graduate and undergraduate.

A council member noted that they tried to keep the process out of the policy. Process stays in the respective calendars and this is more about establishing awards.

Dr. Hayward moved and Dr. Sills seconded, 'that Graduate Council approve the policy as set out in the document, conditional on the approval of Undergraduate Council'

The motion was carried.

#### **X. Academic Program Review (IQAP) Policy**

Ms. Baschiera explained that the document in front of graduate council contained tweaks based on changes in process and documentation since the initial introduction of the policy in 2011. The work had been done by the MacPherson Institute and the School of Graduate Studies with input from an advisory group.

An attendee noted a small correction for section 7.4 where the word 'provost' needed to be added.

Dr. Deza moved and Dr. Agarwal seconded,

'that Graduate Council approve the policy as set out in the document, conditional on the approval of Undergraduate Council.'

The motion was carried.

#### **XI. Faculty of Business Graduate Curriculum and Policy Committee Report**

Dr. Agarwal reported on three items coming for approval. The first was from the Master of Finance program who proposed changes to their admission, course requirements and calendar copy to reflect those changes. The proposed changes to admission requirements was to modify the current requirement of two academic letters of recommendations. The Master of Finance is a professional program and they have experienced a significant number of applicants who are professionals. They would like to change the requirement of two academic references to at least one academic reference to allow for a professional reference. The second change they proposed around their admission requirement relates to the statement of interest. Dr. Agarwal noted that typically information provided in the statement is used to find a supervisor so it is more relevant to research-based degree and the Master of Finance does not find value in requiring the statement. In terms of course requirements, they currently have 15 courses - currently 11 are required and 4 are electives. The proposed change would increase the number of required and reduce the number of available electives. The calendar copy reflects those changes as well as providing clarity around requirements.

Dr. Ibhawoh noted that the statement of interest helps with finding supervisors but is also an index for evaluation and can help to get a sense of candidates' suitability for the program. He asked if the program had considered that. Dr. Agarwal responded that they tend to get that information from other sources.

A council member agreed with the statement of interest comment. One of the objectives is for the candidate to show they have an interest in graduate school. Dr. Agarwal responded that one of the expectations is that they submit a CV and two letters of recommendation. He also noted that the fact that they've applied is their measure of interest.

Dr. Ibhawoh noted that without the statement of interest potential applicants are considered without any sense of their writing. He said that it was ultimately the programs decision but was concerned that there would be no evidence of competency in this respect. Dr. Agarwal responded that the Master of Finance is a highly quantitative program and that there are other ways to judge their written competencies. Most of their applicant pool are visa students to they're required to write a written test to prove proficiency. Dr. Welch noted that this is up to the discretion of the program. If they find they're missing information they can come back and change it again.

The second curriculum change that Dr. Agarwal presented related to the Masters of Health Management. It is a collaborative program between the DeGroot School of Business and the Faculty of Health Sciences and is currently only offered on a part-time basis. They wish to add a full time option. This will involve no changes to curriculum and the proposed implementation date is September 2018.

Dr. Hayward commented that she was not sure this had gone to the Faculty of Health Sciences. Ms. Bryce confirmed that it had back in the fall term. Dr. Agarwal noted that it had been delayed on the Business side with some issues that were then resolved.



Dr. Agarwal presented two final changes from the M.B.A. program. The first one was from the Supply Chain Management specialization. The only change was removing one course from a list of elective options. The second change proposed by M.B.A. was removing the DeGroot Days requirement as part of year 1 curriculum. In the old curriculum there were two mandatory workshops and now the content of these have been absorbed in new year one curriculum.

Dr. Agarwal moved and Dr. Deza seconded, 'Motion: 'that Graduate Council approve the proposed changes as described in the documents.'

The motion was approved with one abstention.

## **XII. Faculty of Science Graduate Curriculum and Policy Committee Report**

Dr. Gupta explained that there were three changes requiring approval: one from Kinesiology, one from Medical Physics and one from Psychology. He noted that also included in the report were a number of course changes for information. Kinesiology proposed decreasing their course requirements for the M.Sc. The intention is that students spend more time on their research. Medical Physics added an additional course as an option to complete degree requirements and the course will offer valuable skills for employability. The final changes were from Psychology and related to the Research and Clinical Training Stream. The stream has limited enrollment and they changed the language around admissions to make that clear and to their requirements to make clear what is expected from students in the program.

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

The motion was carried.

## **XIII. Graduate Program Handbook Checklist**

Dr. Hayward explained that graduate program handbooks contain supplemental rules and regulations that govern a student's academic progress. As the Faculty of Health Sciences started to deal with implementing a formal handbook approval process, they realized they didn't have any guidelines or checklist for what should be included in a handbook and that having such a thing would help with best practices. Dr. Hayward noted that she had been the chair of the working group to deal with this.

The beginning of the checklist highlights that the handbook should contain information that is not included in the Graduate Calendar. The checklist document is organized in terms of what programs should consider putting in different sections and includes links to documentation to be updated on an annual basis. Also included is a process checklist which notes that there should be an annual review of handbooks, and

encourages engaging reviewers from different areas for feedback. The document also indicates that Faculty associate deans set the deadline for review. They are encouraging all programs approved to have their handbooks approved by May of next year.

The document also notes that approved handbooks should be publicly posted. Minor changes can be approved by the associate dean but major changes would go through the faculty curriculum committee.

A council member noted that a lot of the information in the main body is the same for everyone or very similar and asked if there were templates or examples to choose from. Dr. Hayward noted that they found a difference between clinical training programs and research based. There may be advantages to looking at several different handbooks. Ms. Baschiera noted that they could pull together a handful of examples.

A council member asked for clarification on what is meant by minor changes and asked if the associate dean needs to approve all minor changes. Dr. Hayward responded that it's supposed to be the Graduate Admissions and Study Committee, which the associate deans act on behalf of. If there are minor updates related to changes in staffing and nothing related to policies of the program, it's easy for the associate dean to just approve the update handbook. She noted that they have been doing this for several years in FHS. The ones that come to the committee are those with substantial changes or brand new handbooks. When they first started going through formal approval the faculty had them all reviewed which programs found helpful.

A council member noted that there shouldn't be anything in the handbook that isn't already approved in some ways. Dr. Hayward agreed that that should be the case but it's always necessarily true in practice and noted that some of them have specific policies related to the program, like absences from clinical placement. She noted that the handbooks are supposed to be formally reviewed and approved and in some cases had not been for some time.

Dr. Hayward moved and Dr. Agarwal seconded, 'that Graduate Council approve the program handbook checklist as set out in the document.'

The motion was carried.

#### **XIV. Faculty of Health Sciences Spring 2017 Graduands**

Dr. Deza moved and Dr. Thompson seconded 'that Graduate Council approve the list of the 2017 Spring Graduands, with amendments/corrections to be made as necessary by the Associate Graduate Registrar.'

The motion was carried.

#### **XV. New Scholarship**

Dr. Deza moved and Dr. Hayward seconded, 'that Graduate Council approve the new scholarship as set out in the document.'

The motion was carried.

**XVI. Change to Scholarship Committee Membership**

Dr. Deza moved and Dr. Hayward seconded, 'that Graduate Council approve the scholarship committee membership change as set out in the document.'

The motion was carried.