



**School of Graduate Studies**

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Graduate Council  
May 16<sup>th</sup> 1:30 pm  
GH 111

Present: Dr. D. Welch, Ms. S. Baschiera, Ms. C. Bryce, Dr. A. Deza, Dr. B. Doble, Dr. E. Grodek, Dr. D. Pelinovsky, Dr. A. Sills, Dr. I Marwah, Dr. A. Fudge Schormans

Regrets: Dr. A Dean, Dr. T. Adams, Dr. A. Kitai, Dr. L. Thabane, Dr. S. O'Brien, Dr. G. McClelland, Dr. T. Porter, Dr. E. Badone, Ms. R. Estok, Ms. V. Lewis

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## **A G E N D A**

### **I. Minutes of the meeting of April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017**

The minutes of the meeting of April 18<sup>th</sup>, were approved with minor revisions on a motion by Dr. Sills, seconded by Dr. Hayward.

### **II. Business arising**

There was no business arising.

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

Dr. Welch reported that he had been confirmed in his role as Dean and is no longer 'acting'.

He noted that there had been a number of changes with respect to admissions, including the addition a new admissions officer. Two faculties were assigned to each admissions officer. They are now in the endgame of the graduate recruitment cycle and it has gone very well with 11000 applications submitted versus 9000 at this time last year. The addition of a third admissions officer and the review of allowable exceptions not requiring Associate Dean approval has greatly streamlined how quickly an offer is produced by SGS. The delay between a package being received at SGS and giving an offer is normally one day. The worst turnaround was five days, due to extenuating circumstances, and this was turned around very quickly.

Dr. Welch was pleased to point out that there are a lot of policy change discussions finally come home to roost contained within the graduate calendar changes in the package. This has been a multi-faceted approach with a lot of input from a lot of people and he hoped the changes would be seen as progress.

He noted that there had been a little bit of news from the province in terms of graduate funding but no news with respect to any final decisions. The province has said there will be some money for graduate growth,

including programs that are starting right now. He noted that application pressure is high in a number of programs, including a large number of domestic students in new programs. He expected that to assist with negotiations.

Dr. Welch noted that effective June 30<sup>th</sup>, SGS will be thanking and saying goodbye to Dr. Ibhawoh, Dr. Agarwal and Dr. Porter. He said that he was incredibly grateful for contributions. The Business and Social Science searches for a new Associate Dean are complete. Dr. Hassanein from Business and Dr. James Gillett from Social Science will be joining SGS. Those appointments were approved on April 20<sup>th</sup>. He said that the Faculty of Humanities search was well under way and will bring Graduate Council news of that when it's official. As a result of his appointment as AVP and Dean of Graduate Studies, the Associate Dean of science search is also underway and Dr. Gupta will continue in his acting position for the meantime.

Dr. Welch noted that it has been the case in the past that some of the June Graduate Council meetings have been cancelled. He was not certain whether or not it will happen as there is potentially at least one new program to come through.

He thanked departing graduate council members for their contributions over the previous academic year.

Dr. Welch reported that the Provost has decided that due to the fact that McMaster will probably be increasing the number of undergraduate international students that it is important to look at support for international graduate students. There are 6 working groups that have been formed to address issues in various areas and they'll be looking at the whole spectrum of supports needed. Graduate issues are on the radar.

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

Drs. Ibhawoh, Agarwal, Thompson and Gupta had nothing to report. Dr. Hayward report that the FHS Research Plenary was underway and invited Graduate Council members to attend the poster session on Thursday.

#### **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**

Ms. Baschiera reported on behalf of Mr. Self that the IUSRS program was underway. 16 students were moving in and an opening ceremony had been held. She also reported that 45 students attended the thesis writing boot camp and that there was a new student orientation being held on May 18<sup>th</sup>, with 23 students signed up.

#### **VII. Faculty of Engineering Graduate Curriculum and Policy Committee Report**

Dr. Thompson presented the items for approval. The first change proposed was to the Faculty-wide TOEFL requirement. The Faculty wanted to increase it to 88. The change would be beneficial for students in both their course work and in fulfilling their roles as TA.

The second change was a request from the School of Engineering Practice and Technology to change the list of courses accepted for advanced credit for the M.E.M.E and M.Eng.D. programs. New 600 level courses were introduced/approved and the School wants to add them to the list of course available for their already-existing advanced credit option. The third change was another from the M.Eng.D. program who requested a change to their course requirements, removing one required course and formalizing their project as a course rather than a milestone as it appears currently. The fourth change proposed was from Computing and Software. They have had four professional M.Eng. degrees. In the past they had been slightly different in theme, but there was a lot of overlap. The decision of the department was that they would be able to merge all four of them under a single M.Eng. program which would eliminate a number of issues and would be comparable to what was offered in the past. The fifth change proposed was from Engineering Physics who wanted to formalize their seminar series as a course where students would be required to present their research.

Dr. Gupta asked if there were changes to the specific sections contained within the TOEFL requirement. Dr. Thompson responded that they haven't proscribed anything different and have just moved the overall threshold up. Dr. Welch noted that the business of the foreign language exam was mentioned at the graduate deans' retreat. He expected that programs may have individual requirements for each section in the future but that is not the case yet.

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

The motion was carried.

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

Dr. Hayward noted that the items in front of the committee were all fairly straightforward. Speech Language Pathology is a new program launching this year so they've submitted their program calendar copy. The BDC program is allowing students to take an additional business course, and proposed a change to their calendar copy accordingly. Physiotherapy evolved from an undergraduate to graduate program but didn't change their minimum grade requirement for admission so they now proposed to do so. She noted that in practice everyone accepted has been above their minimum requirement in any case. The final changes was from Occupational Therapy who proposed a change to their calendar copy around admissions, as they want to make clear that professionalism is taken into account in the applicant interview process. She noted that OT item still had to go to the Faculty of Health Sciences Executive for approval.

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

The motion was carried.

#### **IX. Graduate Calendar Administrative Sections Changes and Sessional Dates**

A council member noted there was a reference to graduate studies office rather than the School of Graduate Studies in 2.5.5 and there was a typo in 2.5.9.

Dr. Welch outlined the changes to each section of the calendar. In section 1.1 the list of programs was updated to include new programs starting in September. A minor correction to comma placement in the list was noted. In section 1.2.1 a reference to a position that no longer exists within SGS was deleted. In section 1.2.5 faculty advisor a statement was added to clarify that the in course-based/professional or clinical programs a program committee or the department chair acts as the faculty advisor. Section 1.3 was simplified a little bit with the removal of a statement that students were responsible for reporting a change in employment status, related to regulations for full and part time status. The section now also notes that students are responsible for responsible for seeking clarity when required on elements of academic and research progress. Dr. Welch noted that this statement was mirrored in a section highlighting the responsibilities of supervisors later in the document. Also in 1.3 the language around the requirement to be on campus full time was adjusted for clarity and a sentence regarding exceptions for programs delivered partially or fully online was added.

In Section 2.1.1 which concerns the admission requirements for Masters some clarifying text was added that the Bachelors degree needs to be from recognized university and that some programs consider professional experience within application process. Dr. Hayward asked about the language around programs accepting mid-B applicants and wondered if programs need to be consulted. Ms. Baschiera responded that the language was changed to show that programs operate within a zone of requirements and that there are varying requirements between different programs. Dr. Welch noted that as the document was previously written, any program below a B+ was dealt with as an exception in the admissions process and that this was an attempt to streamline. Dr. Agarwal noted that the B+ still appears in section 2.1.2. Dr. Welch said that the change is basically intending to reflect the fact that a number of Master program put forward students that have mid-B grades. Dr. Hayward suggested that programs that wanted to align to the graduate calendar requirements may want to consider a revision to their requirements accordingly. Dr. Welch responded that this was just a minimum requirement and that the programs need not make any changes.

In section 2.1.8 a statement was added to clarify the fact that post-degree students are not allowed to take courses for audit.

Section 2.1.12 was changed according to the change proposed by the Faculty of Engineering previously discussed around raising the minimum TOEFL requirement for Engineering.

Section 2.2. Application for Admission was updated with a new link to the School of Graduate Studies website and the specific amount charged for the application fee was also removed as this will change if approved by the Board of Governors. The section was also adjusted to note that programs may have additional admission requirements and allowed for the possibility of work experience being taken into account in the letters of recommendation.

2.3 Transfer/Advanced Credit was changed to separate out advanced credit and outline the practice for Engineering.

Ms. Baschiera noted that section 2.4 was changed due to a new ministry regulation about when they can accept the deposit from students. The exception is programs that are not ministry-funded – they can charge their deposit earlier if they wish. A council member asked how much the deposit was. Ms. Baschiera responded that it can be \$1000 but programs can only keep back \$500 if the student doesn't come. Unfunded programs can keep the total amount.

Section 2.5.1 - Continuity of Registration was changed to include clarifying statements around readmission for defence and what happens if a student needs more than one term to complete. Ms. Baschiera noted that students are required to maintain continuous enrollment unless there is a scheduled break in the program and they wanted to be very clear in this respect.

Section 2.5.2 includes an explanation of what constitutes a full-time graduate student. Dr. Welch noted there were some changes noting the distinction between research-based programs and those conducted fully online. The section also includes a reminder that a student has to apply to be full-time off-campus. Ms. Baschiera reiterated that this is not a change to policy.

Dr. Gupta asked for confirmation that a student who moves to part-time doesn't get more time to complete. Dr. Welch responded that this is for a student who has been admitted full-time originally. The supervisor expects them to complete their research within a particular time. Students accepted as full-time student have to pay full-time fees for the nominal duration of their degree. Dr. Gupta asked if this was true even if they change in middle of degree. Dr. Welch confirmed this was the case and that nothing about the process was changing.

Section 2.5.3 was adjusted to include agreed-upon text from the Ontario Graduate Deans 'Principles for Graduate Study in Ontario' document. Dr. Welch thought that this captures why the institution has a ten hour rule. It has never been the case that the institution could police a ten hour rule it is also the case that McMaster expects students to make reasonable academic and research progress and the McMaster is not going to give the student more than 10 hours of employment. This is a statement that was jointly adopted and uniform across all Ontario universities.

Dr. Hayward commented that including the word 'should' is nice and that it covers issues where students that are physicians that might be 24 hour on call on the weekend, but are still able to maintain progress in their studies.

A council member asked if this meant that graduate students can go and work full time while they're in graduate school. Dr. Welch responded that the university will not be asking them to produce evidence that they have no job outside of the university. The university will monitor academic and research progress and if those are found to be unacceptable they won't be able to continue. There was a permission to work form in the past but they're not pretending that the institution can police that any more. The section states expectations and principles, particularly in terms of campus employment.

A council member commented that he kept hearing about disparity in stipends between STEM fields and Social Sciences and Humanities and noted that some students might be disadvantaged by the 10 hour rule on campus, when they might be able to make up a shortfall in stipend with additional on-campus work that would still allow them to complete their requirements in a timely fashion. Dr. Welch responded that he recognized that there is a range of challenges financially on campus. The process as it currently stands is the best that can be done right now but it doesn't mean the university can't work on improving the levels of support

The section also includes a note that there are some award-related restrictions on employment and that students are responsible for recognizing that and limiting employment accordingly.

Section 2.5.5 was changed in response to some citizenship and immigration requirements changing. Some language was added to section 2.5.9 referencing the revised academic accommodation policy. In section 2.6.1 a sentence was added to note that final grades are normally converted to letter grade is determined, which is just a clarification of the normal order of operations. The changes to section 2.6.2 have to do with being able to establish what the requirements of a degree are at McMaster. The section now notes that graduate students are normally required to complete their requirements by taking courses from within their program. Section 2.6.4 was changed to clarify the process around incomplete grade and to identify when it will turn into an F. Section 2.6.5 was updated to mention that SGS 101 and 201 are required for all students, including visiting and exchange. In section 2.6.6 clarification was added about who can audit courses. Graduate students cannot audit undergraduate courses. Section 2.6.9 was adjusted to highlight placeholder courses and the process around dropping those, if necessary. This is in recognition of the reality of having to register in Mosaic and having to have one course on record.

Section 2.7 was adjusted to note that a supervisor must be declared within the first five months of study. This information is necessary to track both by the province and inside the university with respect to load on faculty members. In this section a change was also proposed with respect to the date when supervisory committee meeting reports are due: it will now be November 30<sup>th</sup>. Dr. Welch explained that August 31<sup>st</sup> used to be the due date and it was an awful time of year for it. Supervisory committee meetings happening in late August, competed with thesis defences happening in late August. By changing the timing he thought it would work better for students and supervisors. A council member asked if it would apply to students currently in the program. Dr. Welch responded that SGS would be issuing a memo that basically says what the change means for someone who enters at a particular time of year. Students entering this September would not be required to submit a report by November 30<sup>th</sup>. While SGS would encourage them to have meetings as often as needed this one year, a student could go from September to following November without one.

In section 2.8.1 a correction was noted to the spelling of defence. Dr. Ibhawoh asked if the date for the edition of the thesis manual could be removed.

In section 3.2 Program Requirements a reference was added to program handbooks and information contained therein.

Dr. Welch noted that the changes to section 4.2 Program Expectations and Requirements were the result of the work of the working group who met to talk about alternatives to comprehensive exam. He said this had been discussed in length at previous meeting of Graduate Council. The new calendar copy states that a program is allowed to have some means of assessing comprehensive knowledge other than an exam and that if they change that it needs to be approved and it must answer certain questions about procedure and a second attempt.

In section 4.4 Dr. Hayward noted a missing comma in the 6<sup>th</sup> line from the top. Dr. Welch explained that the changes to this section are to deal with a change in practice of what happens when a student receives a negative external report appears and how it gets considered. Our past practice was that a negative external review was like a veto on the defence procedure. The change will bring the process in line with other universities. The substance of an external review will be looked at carefully by supervisory committee and associate deans and a decision will be made about how to proceed. Dr. Gupta asked about the process around a new external, should a negative report be submitted. Dr. Welch responded that as it's written it says it needs to go back to same examiner. The intention was to say that one of the outcomes of that review a different external might be chosen and he said they would look at rewording this paragraph for those changes. Dr.

Hayward noted that they have often had students do point by point rebuttal of major criticism and suggested including a step about consulting with associate to ensure major criticisms can be reported to student.

A council member asked if it was necessary to include the specific academic year where it referenced the fee schedule in section 5.1. Ms. Bryce responded that she thought this mirrored text in the undergraduate calendar.

A council member commented about the General Information section noting that there were some titles and links that might need updating.

With respect to Section 8 Ms. Baschiera noted that a lot of these change were made to reflect the new awards policy and undergraduate calendar. So students moving through careers can see consistent information

A council member asked if there were any practices where a Ph.D. student with two negative external reports could change to a Masters degree. Dr. Welch responded that there hadn't been any discussion around that but that there was opportunity to do that prior to the defence. Dr. Hayward noted that in the years she'd been Associate Dean there had been student issues with progress and in some cases the solution was to allow them to do the equivalent of a Masters. She thought McMaster had mechanisms for dealing with that even though it was difficult to spell all of them out in the Graduate Calendar.

Dr. Ibhawoh commented that there are situations where a student feels they're being held back from defending and asked what mechanism protects the student, noting they should have some recourse in cases like this. Dr. Welch acknowledged that this was a good suggestion.

Dr. Hayward said that there was an issue that had come up with respect to students with disabilities struggling with a full time load and want to switch to part time. She said this was a situation where continuing to charge full time fees might not be appropriate. She asked how that would be dealt with and wondered if it would be through a petition or the accommodation. Dr. Welch agreed to take that note as something to follow up on. Dr. Agarwal noted that this had come up in MBA and it was included as part of the accommodation plan.

A council member asked if it is a university policy that students have to have minimum funding. Dr. Welch responded that Ph.D. students are guaranteed a minimum 17,500 in support. The council member asked what happened if they were self-funded. Dr. Welch said normally they were not self-funded at the Ph.D. level. Dr. Hayward noted that many Masters program handbooks describe minimum funding in program.



Dr. Welch noted there would be an e-ballot to review graduands and the graduate calendar administrative sections once changes were made based on the discussion.

**X. Spring 2017 Graduands**

There was no vote on this item due to lack of quorum.