

Tuesday February 18<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 am in Council Chambers (GH-111)

Present: Dr. D. Welch (Chair), Dr. K. Hassanein, Dr. J. Gillett, Dr. M. Thompson, Dr. B. Gupta, Dr. D. Mountain, Dr. M. Stroinska, Dr. J. Shedden, Dr. I. Bruce, Dr. S. Raha, Ms. S. Baschiera (Associate Registrar and Graduate Secretary), Ms. C. Bryce (Assistant Graduate Secretary),

Regrets: Dr. S. Hanna, Dr. M. Horn, Ms. V. Lewis, Dr. C. Kwan, Dr. L. Chan, Dr. S. Dickson, Dr. S. Bannerman, Dr. N. Tan, Dr. N. McLaughlin, Mr. M. Javdan

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**I. Minutes of the meeting of January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020**

Without quorum this item was deferred.

**II. Business arising**

There was no business arising.

**III. Report from the Vice-Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies**

**Dr. Welch reported on the following items:**

- Changes from the Ministry related to SMA metrics, related to conversations with other universities, noting that McMaster is on track to have a signed agreement in the near future;
- A vendor had been selected for the admissions project and now a contract is being worked on;-
- OGS allocation had not been released yet;
- Issues with students reporting all sources of income meant a change in OSAP eligibility which, in turn, meant a decrease in the number of students eligible for a bursary but larger bursaries given out;-
- The Research Plagiarism Checking Policy went to Senate and approved, wording will be added to the Graduate Calendar related to thesis submission.

In response to a question, Dr. Welch said that the University would not be taking on the liability for OGS allocation if they were not released by the Ministry, he noted that they are still expecting OGS to happen.

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

**Dr. Gupta (Faculty of Science) reported on the following item:**

- They are reviewing graduate handbooks and the graduate instructors guide to make sure everything is up-to-date.

**Drs. Gillett, Hassanein and Thompson had no report.**

**V. Report from the Associate Registrar and Graduate Secretary**

**Ms. Baschiera reported on the following items:**

- The concurrent implement of the new admission system and a new system for students applying to awards;

- The review of a new online form system, with the goal being greater efficiency and a better experience for students and administrators and
- Three tiers of bursaries had been given out this year.

**VI. Faculty of Engineering Graduate Curriculum and Policy Committee Report**

Without quorum this item was deferred.

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

Without quorum this item was deferred.

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

For information items only.

**IX. New Scholarship**

Without quorum this item was deferred.

**X. Discussion of Thesis Submission Grace Period**

Dr. Welch asked Mr. Lightstone to remind members of the issue at hand and noted, in terms of implementation, the earliest any changes could be considered is September 2021 and that this left time to receive feedback about how to improve the process.

Mr. Lightstone highlighted the challenges for students finishing at the end of the fall and winter terms, noting competing priorities and stress for students related to other duties at the time and the other work to be submitted, particularly at the Masters level.

Ms. Baschiera discussed the origin of the grace period, noting that August presents the normal end of study for a student who began in September but because of the volume of defences and the process around arranging them, an accommodation for Ph.D. students was made to allow them to defend and submit their thesis by the end of September. She noted that there had been a number of changes to thesis defence, including the accelerated approach which made planning much more flexible.

Council members discussed financial options, including the reduction in supplemental fees for students returning to complete, removing the September grace period and adding a small fee to each term, and the fact that students are refunded tuition for any months after which they're completed and the resulting incentive to finish earlier. They also discussed the consequences of rolling deadlines.

Dr. Welch noted that the associate deans had discussed the item and he expected they would continue to do so. In response to a question from Dr. Welch, Ms. Baschiera noted the challenge of managing 6 terms with different timelines and the competing administrative priorities in the existing grace period (and in additional ones) In the fall these included start of term activities, stabilization of enrollment and the largest convocation for graduate students. In January the competing priorities included government count deadlines, working with partner offices to ensure correct tax receipts and the failure to register. There is also a concern around equity for students in non-thesis programs who would not under the current conception of the grace period, qualify

for one. She highlighted a lot of opportunity to discuss but that this was not a consideration for the School of Graduate Studies alone.

Council members discussed the percentage of students who go into the grace period, the number of defences using the accelerated model and the overall number of Ph.D. defences. Ms. Baschiera said she could bring that information to a future meeting.

Council members discussed the different kinds of extensions available to students and the different options related to fees and convocation if a student were to pass the extension period.

Council members discussed the accelerated thesis defence process, including the lack of black-out periods, the benefits of the system overall, sharing the external report with the student and feedback around the accelerated system.

Dr. Welch said they would bring back the item for discussion at a future meeting and would circulate the data discussed ahead of time.