

Tuesday June 9th at 9:30 am via Zoom

Present: Dr. D. Welch (Chair), Dr. K. Hassanein, Dr. J. Gillett, Dr. M. Thompson, Dr. B. Gupta, Dr. S. Hanna, Dr. M. Horn, Dr. N. McLaughlin, Mr. D. Cursio, Dr. F. McNeill, Dr. I. Bruce, Dr. J.P. Xu, Dr. J. Shedden, Dr. J. West-Mays, Ms. J. de Lange, Dr. C. Kwan, Mr. L. Greville, Dr. M.-A. Letendre, Mr. M. Lighstone, Dr. S. Raha, Dr. L. Thabane, Dr. S. Bannerman, Dr. L. Chan, Dr. S. Pope, Dr. N. Tan, Mr. M. Javdan, Ms. S. Zakaria, Dr. D. Mountain, Dr. J. Kish, Mr. D. Cursio Ms. S. Baschiera (Associate Registrar and Graduate Secretary), Ms. C. Bryce (Assistant Graduate Secretary),

Attendees: Ms. C. Seiler

I. Minutes of the meeting of May 19th, 2020

It was duly moved and seconded, **‘that Graduate Council approve the minutes of the meeting of May 19th, 2020.’**

The motion was **carried**.

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:

- The President’s letter with clarity on arrangements for fall 2020;
- An increase in the numbers of students who have accepted offers compared to the same time last year;
- The beginning of a return to on-campus research process for non-Covid research starting June 1st;
- International student arrival, including that the government is allowing students to begin studies online without endangering the post-graduate study permit status and that the institution is putting together communication for students affected by restrictions that are still in place;
- The cleared to graduate extension process for fall 2020.

IV. Report from the Graduate Associate Deans

Dr. Hanna (Faculty of Health Sciences) reported on the following items;

- Preparations for the fall, noting that on the course side programs seemed to be getting ready, but that there were particular challenges in programs that involve clinical training;
- Preserving the new activities or processes that have arisen as a result of the pandemic that are working well;
- Reviewing the role of supervisors in relation to support and facilitated admissions for indigenous learners.

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

- Work around the transition for his 6 month leave;
- Uncertainties and concern around fall recruitment, noting concerns that there have been high acceptances but students might request to defer;
- Covid support for students;
- A review of fall grad courses, noting that it looks like they will all be able to be held remotely;
- Review and ranking of Tri-Council scholarships;
- The appointment of an Acting Director for Neuroscience.

Dr. Horn (Faculty of Humanities) reported on the following items:

- Work within the Faculty related to Tri-Council changes;
- Work on dealing with Covid complications for the fall and winter terms.

Dr. Gillett (Faculty of Social Sciences) reported on the following items:

- The development of a professional Masters degree within the Faculty, noting that it's sitting with Quality Council;
- Work on curriculum issues in some programs, including different kinds of international opportunities and integrating activities that graduate studies are involved in in the community;
- Work with faculty and graduate students on the Covid rebuilding process and looking at different contingencies for fall and winter.

Dr. Thompson (Faculty of Engineering) reported on the following items:

- Courses online for the entire Faculty, with the potential for some experiential learning in SEPT in person, provided social distancing and safety can be established;
- IQAP reviews being rescheduled;
- Integrating the new research plagiarism checking software into Avenue to Learn and related beta testing;
- Continued work on the refresh to SGS 101;
- Continued work on the Microcredentials academy;
- Virtual Engineering Consortium event in the fall;
- Meeting with other Associate Deans of Engineering across Ontario to exchange thoughts and best practices, noting that he was pleased to see how McMaster had performed compared with peer institutions;
- Work with the MacPherson Institute on specialized TA training for Engineering students in the summer;
- The development of a peer mentorship program in the Faculty.

Dr. Hassanein (Faculty of Business) reported on the following items:

- Programs going completely online, and related issues with students taking a co-op, noting that they would be allowing students to finish with two terms of co-op instead of three if requested;
- Fall term planning including engaging accepted applicants with webinars and surveys to see what they can do to support;
- Exploration of the limited number of courses they might be able to deliver at the Ron Joyce Centre;
- Exploration on some joint Ph.D. courses.

Council members discussed an issue at another university which had created a lot of debate internationally, including whether McMaster was preparing a response. Dr. Welch noted that the Faculty Deans and the Equity and Inclusion Office would be involved in any such response.

V. Report from the Associate Registrar and Graduate Secretary

Ms. Baschiera reported on the following items

- Enrollment opening on July 7th;
- Working closely with the MacPherson Institute to define inter-institutional categories for programs, including the levels of approval required.

VI. Student Supervisor Working Group Update

Dr. Raha provided an overview of the report submitted to Graduate Council, and developments related to the work the committee had done including the faculty and staff survey facilitated by Andrea Cole and her team. He also highlighted the work underway within the School of Graduate Studies (SGS) and the office of the AVP Faculty to act on the needs noted, including revisions to the SGS website to act as a central repository for the resources available on campus and revisions to the SGS 101 course.

Dr. Raha asked members to review the document and get back to him with feedback.

Council members discussed the existing student-supervisor document that SGS developed and whether there was a way to better adapt it for implementation in individual programs.

In response to a question about whether student concerns about racism at McMaster surfaced through this survey as well as work within SGS on this issue, Dr. Welch noted that Andrea Cole's position in SGS was very much concerned with equity and inclusion and that she worked closely with other offices at McMaster to assist graduate students with these issues. He also highlighted other work on campus, including in the Equity and Inclusion Office and an agreement between McMaster and CUPE regarding training in this respect. Dr. Raha commented that the working group had discussed those issues in the context of communication and that students and faculty had all agreed that communicating clearly is really important, particularly where there is a cultural divide.

Related to the needs noted by students in the survey, council members discussed what kind of oversight students were looking for which included assurances that someone was checking on whether supervisors were doing a good job or not. Council members noted the importance of clarifying the kind of oversight that already exists as well as the importance of balance between an orientation to repairing relationships and legalistic oversight.

Dr. Raha noted that the working group had discussed the importance of this and the related aspect of communication and that this was one of the areas where they thought peer mentorship could be particularly useful in clarifying a student's rights, coaching on communication, and highlighting the resources available.

Council members discussed the importance of developing a broader culture of support, the time challenges associated with ideas for improvement and the potential of taking advantage of current circumstances where work is online to encourage the use of the tools available.