

Graduate Council

Tuesday February 23rd at 9:30 am via Zoom

Present: D. Welch (Chair), J. Gillet, S. Hanna, M. Horn, K. Hassanein, M. Thompson, B. Gupta, S. Brophy, J.P. Xu, J. Shedden, J. Kish, A. Shi, S. Raha, A. Roddick, M. Stroinska, J. West-Mays, B. Farmer, S. Bannerman, C. Davidson, D. Mountain, O. Loertscher, E. Wright, M. Naisani, S. Dickson, L. Thabane, K. Tsang, S. Baschiera (Associate Registrar and Graduate Secretary), C. Bryce, (Assistant Graduate Secretary)

Regrets: M. Parlar, C. Seiler

I. Minutes of the meeting of January 19th, 2021

It was duly moved and seconded, **'that Graduate Council approve the minutes of the meeting of January 19th, 2021 as set out in the document.'**

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 current Covid restriction status and the related effects on on-campus activities;
- International graduate student arrival, including regulations around hotel quarantine and the planned amount of costs to be covered for arrivals to May 3rd;
- The Return to McMaster task force working to shape what the fall 2021 term will look like, noting that he would like input from various faculties;
- McMaster's upcoming Gradflix competition, originally designed by the University of Waterloo to allow students a creative way to communicate their research;
- The status of the selection of the new graduate associate dean for Business.

Council members discussed the situation for domestic students that choose to travel.

IV. Report from the Graduate Associate Deans

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

- A significant increase in international applications;
- Updates to two guides, one for graduate course instructors and one for graduate program directors.

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

- International business student arrivals, covering costs and the importance of clear communication;
- Increase in international applications to all programs.

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

- International student arrivals and the work on helping students with the new requirements;

- A virtual coffee house recruitment drive for domestic students.

Council members discussed whether the School of Graduate Studies should recommend international students delay to January as a precaution for quarantine measures. Dr. Welch responded that it's too early to make that recommendation.

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

- Application numbers up around 30%, with a lot of variability between programs including Public Health with a 68% increase;
- Revision in terms of how program scholarships funds (from SGS) are distributed, with the introduction of a set of plans to modify to ensure that the money is spent very close to the year it's allocated;
- A Virtual FHS Research Plenary, noting that they are transitioning to a research and professional excellence model to allow professional programs to participate.

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

- Overall application numbers are up, including in terms of international.

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

- Work to manage the increase in application numbers;
- Planning for the fall term with programs;
- Reviewing applications and planning for the launch of the new Masters of Public Policy program starting in May;
- Planning for new program development that came out of the Strategic Alignment Fund call.

V. Report from the Associate Registrar and Graduate Secretary

Ms. Baschiera reported on the following items

- They are moving to end user testing on the admissions project, working on a cutover plan and are still on pace to launch for the beginning of August;
- McMaster's plan to provide 20 spaces for students who are currently or were formerly in foster care.

VI. Faculty of Engineering Graduate Curriculum and Policy Committee Report

Dr. Thompson presented the items which included the following:

- An update to the research areas offered by Biomedical Engineering;
- A change to the Faculty of Engineering co-op option to allow students to take a longer experience and to update the language around seminar requirements to note students are exempt while on co-op.

It was duly moved and seconded, **'that Graduate Council approve the changes proposed by the Faculty of Engineering as described in the documents.'**

The motion was **carried**.

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

For information items only.

VIII. Faculty of Humanities Graduate Curriculum and Policy Committee Report

Dr. Horn explained there were two items for approval from English and Cultural Studies:

- A change in MA course stream to reduce the number of courses from 8 to 7
- A change to the comprehensive examination, moving it to pass/fail from graded.

Dr. Horn noted that the program is going through and IQAP review and that the department has signaled that there will be further changes coming down the road

It was duly moved and seconded, **‘that Graduate Council approve the changes proposed by the Faculty of Humanities as described in the documents.’**

The motion was **carried**.

IX. MCYU Graduate Certificate of Completion

Dr. Raha provided some context for McMaster Child and Youth University and noted that when they turned it into undergraduate courses that formed part of a minor, they lost graduate student engagement. So they’ve created a certificate for graduate students to use their own research topics to engage youth in the community, take part in building transferrable skills and experiential learning in the community and give them some credit for it. The certificate would be open to students in all programs.

In response to a question, Dr. Raha noted that the program is entirely free and the certificate would be open to students in all programs.

Council members discussed the approval pathway and the context of the certificate, noting that it is not a credential for graduate work.

It was duly moved and seconded, **‘that Graduate Council approve the certificate as set out in the document.’**

The motion was carried.

X. Graduate Calendar Administrative Section Update

Dr. Thompson explained that they had worked to ensure all calendar sections are in line with current policies and noted that on an annual basis edits are made to the document which can lead to duplication or inconsistencies. So they looked over the entire calendar and reorganized it for clarity and ease of finding information. They have not changed current policies but have moved things around. The item was brought forward to allow members to review and comment and will be bringing it back for a vote.

XI. New Scholarships

It was duly moved and seconded, **‘that Graduate Council approve the new scholarships as set out in the document.’**

The motion was **carried**.

XII. Facilitated Admissions

Dr. Welch presented the item for discussion, noting that there have been various efforts over the past several years to get underrepresented groups to apply to graduate students and identify roadblocks to current requirements for graduate school. He noted the context at McMaster, highlighting the effort within the Faculty of Health Sciences on facilitated indigenous admissions and work on the new graduate admission software to ensure the questions being asked are appropriate to EDI standards.

Ms. Baschiera commented that they think the time is right to have discussion about how they might change admissions in general to make it better for this era but also how to embrace facilitated admissions for specific underrepresented groups. To that end, there's going to be a working group on this, and they want to ask members of Graduate Council if they are interested in being part of the initiative.

Dr. Hanna provided some context for the work on facilitated admissions for indigenous learners within the Faculty, noting that a lot of progress had been made at the undergraduate level, particularly in the B.H.Sc. program and they continue to seek ways to advance indigenous admissions at the graduate level, highlighting the Associate Dean for Indigenous Health, Bernice Downey.

Council members discussed the need for a framework to highlight the weight given to EDI for applicants.