

Graduate Council
Tuesday September 14th at 9:30 am via Zoom

Present: D. Welch (Chair), M. Thompson, S. Hanna, M. Horn, G. Mulvale, B. Gupta, M. Dion, M. Stroinska, N. Tan, M. Abouei, T. McDonald, M. Parlar, Z. Samaan, R. Wu, J. Kish, A. Roddick, N. Kuthathasan, S. Tighe, S. Brophy, T. Chamberlain, W. Farmer, S. Medeiros, A. Shi, S. Raha, E. Darling, A. Cole, K. Tsang, A. Thyret-Kidd, S. Baschiera (Associate Registrar and Graduate Secretary), C. Bryce, (Assistant Graduate Secretary)

I. Minutes of the meeting of May 18th, 2021

It was duly moved and seconded, **‘that Graduate Council approve the minutes of the meeting of May 18th, 2021.’**

The motion was **carried**.

II. Business arising

There was no business arising.

III. Provost and Vice-President Academic, Dr. Susan Tighe

Dr. Susan Tighe highlighted the importance of McMaster’s vaccine mandate for the health and safety of the community. In response to a question about a request for an exemption on human rights grounds, Dr. Tighe noted that they have a team of professionals evaluating all such requests and that they’re committed to students finishing their degrees and progressing through their programs. There aren’t a lot of exemptions that qualify but they are stressing empathy and compassion.

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

Dr. Welch provided context for Graduate Council duties and reported on the following items:

- McMaster’s vaccine policy, noting it was announced on August 16th, that September 19th was the deadline to apply for vaccine exemptions and October 18th is when all evidence of vaccine proof will need to have been uploaded for those without approved exemptions;
- Effective September 1st the brand-new grad admissions process and installation launched;
- The School of Graduate Studies has in-person office hours 4 days out of 5, and services offered now include an online chat system;
- The valedictorian competition, noting that they would either speak in person or virtually depending on what the university decides is the plan for November convocation.

In response to a question about extensions to the timeline for graduate students to finish their degrees Dr. Welch noted that there is capacity in every Faculty for support if the circumstances justify it. Members discussed the context in different faculties.

V. Report from the Graduate Associate Deans

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

- The context of vaccine policies within the Faculty;
- FHS graduate student federation activities;
- Office hours are offered in the Faculty but they have stayed remote.

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

- An initiative from the engineering graduate student initiative focused on the wellbeing of students outside of program activities.

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

- The transition back to campus is going well;
- The MBA program is running three cohorts in person and one online.

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

- Most graduate courses are online;
- Working with programs about options for extensions;
- Initiatives within the Faculty regarding mentorship of students;
- CGS-D scholarships, noting they're setting up committees and getting ready to receive applications.

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

- A blend of online and in-person courses within the Faculty;
- The strategic plan in the Faculty including many graduate initiatives;
- Strong graduate recruitment and exceptional performance in scholarships last year;
- The importance of recruiting and funding international Ph.D. students;
- Continuing to work with programs on enrollment management;
- Interested in trying to find ways for graduate students to get involved in research and new training opportunities;
- Work with the Faculty of Health Sciences on developing a new professional program around mental health;
- Exploring how microcredentials fit in with graduate education.

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

- Thanks to departments and staff for their work in welcoming a substantially larger graduate student population.

VI. Report from the Associate Registrar and Graduate Secretary

Ms. Baschiera reported on the following items:

- School of Graduate Studies office hours and online services;
- Launch of Slate for 2022 admissions including a transition period for January and May admits;
- Revised offers are being sent to any students who have accepted for winter and spring, stipulating the vaccine requirement prior to enrollment, decisions around September 2022 offer letters will be made over the coming weeks.

VII. Graduate Expectations Arising from the McMaster Vaccine Policy

Dr. Welch explained that the undergraduate version of the policy had been approved by Undergraduate Executive and that the item for consideration was the graduate version. He noted that it has been the subject of a huge amount of work with the Faculties, Provost Council and EIO and that the most recent version circulated added some organizational structure without a change to any of the underlying activity or intentions of the policy.

In response to a question about how to advise international students with study permit delays Dr. Welch commented that here are now in the FAQs with a very clear delineation of what happens when they arrive. An international student can arrive without the vaccine. After they quarantine, they can get vaccinated and the institution is not prejudicing what happens until they've had the opportunity to get vaccinated.

Dr. Mulvale proposed a slight amendment in point 4, noting the reference to offsite students and commenting that they don't want to jeopardize relationships with co-op placements and for students themselves who were not intending to be on campus.

Members discussed the conversations around this issue at the undergraduate level and the administrative implications of managing the exception and the context in clinical placements. Dr. Welch suggested that they remove the reference to 'off-site' in item 4 and leave that to be defined after further consideration and addressed either at a specially convened meeting or email vote.

In response to a question about enforcement and the consequences of non-compliance Dr. Welch responded that the School of Graduate Studies would be taking the lead in figuring out the intersection of the lists (of enrolled and vaccinated), and taking action accordingly.

It was duly moved and seconded **'that Graduate Council approve the graduate expectations arising from the McMaster Vaccine Policy as set out in the document, removing the reference to off-campus in number 4.'**

The motion was **carried**.

VIII. New Program Proposal – M.Sc. in Midwifery

Dr. Darling presented the proposal for a new M.Sc. degree in midwifery. It would be the first in the country. She explained that currently midwives in Canada are trained at the undergraduate program and about 16% have graduate training. They obtain that graduate training in other countries. The proposal for the M.Sc. is for a program to be offered primarily online which would be accessible to those across the country and beyond. There are thesis and non-thesis streams.

It was duly moved and seconded, **'that Graduate Council approve the proposed new program as described in the documents.'**

The motion was **carried**.

IX. Changes to Scholarship

It was duly moved and seconded, **'that Graduate Council approve the proposed changes to scholarship as set out in the document.'**

The motion was **carried**.

X. Delay in Instituting the Mandatory Thesis Requirement of the Research Plagiarism Checking Policy

Dr. Thompson explained that the School of Graduate studies and institution had put forward an initiative where faculty members would use Avenue to Learn to identify issues of originality in material before they're sent out externally for review. He explained that the original vendor, Urkund, had servers in Sweden and were compliant to the European Union regulations around privacy. It was the ideal company to do originality scans. Since that time there has been a hostile takeover bid by Turnitin and the status is now not clear. He noted that folks are still allowed to use it and it was always intended to be a tool. In terms of the mandate for graduate theses before defence, given the current context, it seemed prudent to delay the implementation for a year.

It was duly moved and seconded, **'that Graduate Council approve the delay in instituting the Mandatory Thesis Requirement of the Research Plagiarism Checking Policy.'**

The motion was **carried**.

There being no other business the meeting was adjourned.