



FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES MEETING MINUTES

21 November 2024 | 12:30 pm | Zoom

A meeting of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies was held on Thursday, 21 November 2024 at 12:30 pm. M. Hunt was the Chair.

ATTENDANCE

D. Clemens, H. Cote, J. Cragg, D. Elmo, J. Fletcher, A. Frank, M. Gordon, D. Grecov, S. Hagerman, B. Hirsh, N. Hodges, M. Hunt, M. Jessri, J. Karim, J. Locher, D. O'Donoghue, J. Phelps, R. Price, M. Read, J. Ries, R. Sharma, P. Shipley, A. Summers, P. Unung, B. Weber

Staff: M. Davis

1. CALL TO ORDER

M. Hunt called the meeting to order at 12:30 pm.

2. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

3. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Approved by
general consensus

}

*That the agenda of the 21 November 2024 meeting of the
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies be approved.*

Carried.

4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Approved by
general consensus

}

*That the minutes of the 21 October 2024 meeting of the
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies be approved.*

Carried.

5. CHAIR'S REMARKS

- M. Hunt discussed the introduction of a new Qualtrics site to manage agenda items for a council, following a model from the Okanagan campus. This system is intended to help document and organize agenda items from Graduate Council members more effectively, rather than relying on emails. Council members can submit topics, specifying whether they are motions, discussion points, or topics of interest, along with a brief summary and estimated time required. The aim is to make the council more inclusive by allowing all members to contribute ideas and improvements, not just focusing on issues identified by G+PS faculty and staff.
- The discussion focused on the recent updates regarding Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada's (IRCC) regulations and their impact on graduate students at UBC. A key change is that starting January 22, 2024, graduate students will now be subject to the study permit cap, which previously only applied to undergraduates and non-degree graduate students. This meant that international graduate students must apply for their study permits by January 21, 2024, without needing a Provincial Attestation Letter (PAL).



- UBC has been in talks with the province to secure enough PALs, estimating a need for around 8,000 this year, up from 6,066 in 2023. The PAL system would now include graduate and exchange students. Although it was anticipated that UBC will receive sufficient PALs, there's uncertainty regarding the broader implications for international student applications. Despite a drop in international applications (with a significant decrease from China and India), UBC remained confident about its graduate student enrolment, historically admitting around 3,500 students annually.
- The group remained optimistic that enrolment might not decrease proportionally, as past data suggested that the number of applicants didn't always correlate directly with the number of enrolments. Despite concerns about the application drop, it was believed that some students who were previously hesitant may still apply as the situation becomes clearer.
- The group also discussed strategies to address the impact of this application drop, including considering whether to adjust offer strategies or the number of offers made, as well as concerns about enrolment "melt" (students who accept offers but don't show up).
- There was mention of potential opportunities arising from international student interest shifting away from the U.S., especially considering recent political changes in the U.S.
- Additionally, the University of Toronto's recent decision to raise its PhD minimum stipend to \$40,000 was highlighted as a potential challenge for UBC in terms of attracting and retaining graduate students, though there was an ongoing effort to advocate for increased central support for graduate students at UBC.

6. BUSINESS ARISING FROM LAST MEETING: GEN AI-GRAD – J. Phelps

- J. Phelps presented findings from a survey on the use of Generative AI in graduate education at UBC-V.
- The discussion revolved around the integration of generative AI (Gen AI) in graduate education, focusing on developing clear guidance for its use. J. Phelps, who is leading a working group on this issue, shared feedback gathered from students and faculty. Key feedback included requests for clarity on what types of AI tools were appropriate (e.g., Grammarly vs. Gen AI), concerns about intellectual property and copyright issues, and a need for support in detecting AI-generated content. Faculty also expressed the need for clear guidelines on when Gen AI use is appropriate, with an emphasis on academic integrity.
- J. Phelps noted that UBC does not necessarily need new policies but can rely on existing academic integrity rules, though more specific guidance on AI use in different academic contexts (e.g., courses, theses) was needed. Some faculty members suggested that overarching UBC policies would be more effective than individual program policies, with clear guidelines such as the requirement to disclose AI use. A proposal for a "laundry list" of AI use cases and an external facilitator for program-level discussions were also discussed.
- The student survey revealed that many students already use Gen AI for tasks like coding and writing, with some seeing it as a career-enhancing tool. However, there was low support from programs or supervisors for exploring its use. Students not using AI cited concerns about academic integrity, quality of work, and ethical issues.
- The conversation emphasized the importance of setting boundaries for Gen AI use in academia while focusing on education and ongoing consultation to develop evolving policies.

7. POLICY CHANGE PROPOSALS

- None.

8. DISCUSSION ITEMS

Proposed Policy Changes for 2024-25 – M. Hunt & A. Frank

- Academic Progress
 - The council discussed the current policy on academic progress, focusing on the need to define 'satisfactory progress' on thesis or doctoral dissertation. M. Hunt suggested that expectations might differ across disciplines and proposed developing generic, generalized definitions of expectations and consequences of failure to meet them. The discussion also touched on the role of annual progress reports and the process for student withdrawal.
 - There was also discussion about what to do with failed courses, as current policy dictates that any failed course by a graduate student must be re-taken (or an alternate course completed), or they must withdraw from the program. This creates concerns in instances where the failed course is not integral to the research topic of the student.



- **Action: G+PS will consider changes to the wording to better reflect the purpose of the policy – that is, balancing interdisciplinary learning with ensuring core curricular outcomes are met.**
- Audits
 - The current audit policy was examined, with M. Hunt pointing out that it appears to be undergraduate-centric and specific to courses with final exams. The council discussed potential changes to make the policy more flexible and applicable to graduate courses, including allowing instructors more discretion in determining audit requirements.
 - **Action: G+PS will reach out to Senate to see if a change in the campus-wide policy is feasible; if not, potentially creating a new sub-policy specific to graduate courses.**
- Maximum program duration – Masters degree students
 - M. Hunt presented data on the time to completion for research-based master's students, showing that the average time is about 2.6 years. The council debated whether to reduce the maximum program duration from five years, with most members favoring a reduction to four years. Concerns were raised about the potential increase in extension requests and the impact on different types of research programs.
- Pain points from the committee
 - The meeting reached its time limit, so the topic was not discussed.

Tuition Allocation Model for Graduate Students – M. Hunt

- The meeting reached its time limit, so the topic was not discussed.

9. OTHER BUSINESS

- None.

10. ADJOURNMENT

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:03 pm.