

MINUTES

Meeting of the Graduate Academic Policy Committee

Monday, December 2, 2024, 2.00-3.30 PM

Location: Zoom

Present: Adam Frank (Chair), Michael Hunt, Richard Price, Curtis Suttle, Dónal O'Donoghue, Jolanta Aleksejuniene, Shannon Hagerman, John Ries, Max Read, Jennifer Fletcher (guest), Orkhon Gantogtokh, Sumeet Gulati, Jie Cheng, Patricia Unung, Julian Dierkes (guest)

Regrets: Sumeet Gulati

1. **ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

Michael proposed adding an item re: student funding data

<i>All</i>	}	<i>That the agenda be approved.</i>
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Carried

2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

<i>All</i>	}	<i>That the minutes be approved.</i>
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Carried

3. **BUSINESS ITEMS**

a. **Parental Accommodation Policy**

- Adam introduced a revision to the current policy that aims at maintaining student status with maximum flexibility for an 8-week period surrounding the arrival of a new child. The idea is to allow as much flexibility as possible without making the student go on leave of absence
- This differs from the regular leave of absence (for parental, health, personal, professional, or academic reasons) granted for 4, 8 or 12 months. Graduate students are expected to not undertake any academic or research work while they are on a leave of absence.
- The proposed policy applies only to full-time students. Adam acknowledged the need for a more inclusive policy language to accommodate all graduate students. He then shared the revised policy document with the group and put it to vote (the phrase 'full-time' has been removed from this document)

<i>All</i>	}	<i>That the revised policy be approved.</i>
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Carried

b. **Policy on the Academic Progress**

- In introducing the revised policy document to the group, Adam said that there was no significant way for G+PS to gauge academic progress on research. This is a matter of the

student's supervisory committee and home program. Another issue was the usage of the term 'course' instead of more specific 'required course' in the context of a student failing a course not required by their program of study. In the revised policy, 'course required by the program' has been added instead of 'course.'

- Other problems – lack of definition of progress through different stages of doctoral programs (coursework, comprehensive exams, dissertation), or expected timelines for 'Part Time' and 'Full Time with Reduced Workload' students.
- Re: lack of research progress in research-based program, Jolanta suggested adding this to develop a criterion: 'the progress is unsatisfactory as confirmed by supervisor or graduate student advisor.' Orkhon suggested adding 'supervisory committee' as well.
- Patricia asked about the section saying 'if an advisor does not recommend a remedy' – Max explained that it was very unusual to happen – but if a student was failing multiple courses or if the program assessed that the student was not a suitable fit despite multiple opportunities – it was within Dean's purview to require them to withdraw due to unsatisfactory academic progress.
- Julian asked what would normally happen when a department moved towards withdrawal, but didn't have a process in place – Michael said he would look into documentation in that scenario – and see if the student had been provided enough opportunities to redress their issues.
- Jolanta asked when exactly could a program enforce the withdrawal process, if a student had been given opportunities? Julian said if the student did not live up to the expectation as specified in the warning letter, program could go ahead with the withdrawal. Curtis pointed out there were a number of programs which did not require courses – and that there was a difference in the notion of progress as it applies to a Master's program and a PhD program. He showed his disagreement with G+PS being centrally prescriptive on this matter. Adam responded that the programs with no coursework requirement could simply ignore the concerned section of the policy. Curtis later said that there were vast differences in courses both within and without the departments and trying to devise a common rule for the overall setup was untenable. John disagreed with him and said that the proposed policy was not constraining anything and was simply laying out that the required courses be passed.
- Michael provided some context behind this policy change – various programs across campus would end up spending a lot of time and resources in figuring out whether a course taken by a student (and failed) could be retaken or not – this policy change will allow programs to reserve more resources for the required courses part of the degree.

All	}	<i>That the revised policy be approved with the proviso that emendations be made to research progress section.</i>
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With 9 for and 1 against the policy, 0 abstentions

Carried

c. Audit Policy

- Adam introduced changes to the existing audit policy which states that a student is expected to complete all course requirements except the final exam, and may be given Fail (F(AUD)) standing if their performance is not satisfactory. He commented that it was oriented towards undergraduate programs. What about courses with no final exams? How could

graduate students make use of the audit option to get a more expansive training without incurring the risk of having a low grade on a transcript?

- He then proposed two solutions:
 - 1) Revise existing standing AUD (expectations to be set by the course instructor)
 - 2) Introduce a new standing (AUD-G) – to be granted to a student who was officially approved as having audit status in a graduate course.
- Dónal – contradiction in expectation set by course instructor – a student ‘may be’ expected to complete all assignments – that limits the instructor’s margin – language could be refined
- It needs to be there for the purpose of student knowing
- Dónal – if it would be better to add ‘expectations set by the instructor, incl. the nature of participation and assignments’ - I am not sure how helpful that final exam reference would be, consd. Adam acknowledges this and agrees with the proposed change
- Patricia said that attaching a value to an audit course might be counterproductive for students because oftentimes, students like to audit courses to see if a course could be relevant to the research methodology – Max said students who wanted to explore might be permitted to sit in on courses but in order to get credit on their transcript for auditing, they needed to present a certain amount of work that could be evaluated. In that case, Patricia said, it would be valuable to introduce a clause of sitting in on a course – Max commented that there were many instances where students made arrangements with the course instructors. Adam said that sitting in on a course was not subject to policy but up to the instructors (e.g. if they had enough space in their classroom).
- In terms of procedure, Adam said he would talk to Michael and consult with the Senate to make revisions and would then bring it back to the committee

4. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

a. Graduate Student Funding Data

- Michael shared some statistics on student funding with the group and provided some context for sharing this data: University of Toronto recently increased its minimum funding to 40k per annum - Michael said that even though UBC’s minimum funding is 24k across university – the median comes up to around \$40k.
- Curtis asked if the tuition fee was included in the figures shared - Michael said that tuition fee fell under GPO Funding because the tuition money given to students was classified as a funding award.
- Through funding instruments that could be controlled by G+PS (RA, UBCGPOF, Teaching, ITA), all graduate students got around \$150.6 million (PhD students \$91.1, years 1-4 \$69.6 million)
Whereas, through the funding instruments that fell out of G+PS control (Tri-Agency, Internal Scholarship (to some extent), External Scholarships, Other) - all graduate students got around \$35.6 million (PhD students \$21.2million, years 1-4 \$17.8 million)
- In 2022-23 (Years 1-4), for students getting above \$24k – the funding mean was \$41,585 (net \$33,184 after tuition/fees) and median was \$40,138 (net \$31,361 after tuition/fees)
- No real differences were noticed between males and females – international students get a little more than the domestic students because they get the ITA. For the Indigenous students, the median was \$41,331 (net \$36,080 after tuition/fees). No particular bias was noticed towards one particular demographic group or another

- Jie asked if G+PS had funding information from graduate schools other than Toronto – Michael responded that his office looked at other institutions in terms of their minimum but did not have the capacity to check out every institution. He would, however, welcome any such move at an individual program level.
Jie also asked if other departments also did not provide a base funding for non-PhD graduate students – Michael said it was rare to have an institution-wide policy for master's students

b. Other Items

- Michael announced Julian's departure from UBC and expressed gratitude for his contributions.

5. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:32pm.