

MINUTES

Meeting of the Graduate Academic Policy Committee

Monday, 13 January 2025, 2-3.30pm

Location: Zoom

Present: Adam Frank (Chair), Michael Hunt, Richard Price, Curtis Suttle, Jie Cheng, Davide Elmo, Dónal O'Donoghue, Jolanta Aleksejuniene, Shannon Hagerman, John Ries, Thomas Chang, Jenny Phelps (guest), Max Read, Jennifer Fletcher (guest), Orkhon Gantogtokh

Regrets: Sumeet Gulati

1. **ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

All	}	That the agenda be approved.
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Carried

2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

All	}	That the minutes be approved.
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Carried

3. **BUSINESS ITEMS**

- Michael provided an update on the high-level assessment of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies scheduled for February 3-4
 - The Provost Office had decided to do a high-level informal review of the graduate education ecosystem at UBC. It was part of an effort to ensure that graduate education factored into the ongoing Strategic Plan Refresh.
 - The focus was to be around budgetary questions and reach-out to the programs
 - Jenny mentioned there was also going to be a session with the reviewers where all the Deans had been invited.

4. **ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

Academic Progress Policy

- Adam provided a brief summary of the developments from the last meeting (December 2024) and noted that G+PS wanted to revisit the issue of repeating a failed course. Specifically, the policy now states that "when repeating a failed required course, a minimum mark of 74% must be obtained."
- Adam also mentioned that G+PS was eager to receive feedback from Committee members regarding the concept of 'satisfactory progress.' While generally considered best practice, it was agreed at the last meeting that it would be helpful to explicitly include this in the policy.
- John inquired about the situation where a student, at the pre-candidacy stage, might not be making academic progress due to the absence of a formal supervisory committee. Adam explained that before candidacy, this could manifest as students not meeting *milestones*, with the expectation that *milestones* would address the issue for those not yet at candidacy.

Michael suggested considering a maximum time limit—perhaps one year—beyond which a lack of progress would no longer be in the student’s best interest. The scope of the current policy change primarily applies to students in their 4th, 5th, and 6th years, who would have already reached candidacy.

- Curtis asked whether a graduate advisor would be explicitly involved in cases where a student had no other options left, expressing concern about fairness. Adam confirmed that the policy's goal was to ensure fairness for both the supervisory committee and the students. Michael added that G+PS aimed to balance collective oversight with individual program autonomy to safeguard student interests.
- Jolanta shared that, in the Faculty of Dentistry, the process did not begin with the supervisor but with an individual reaching out to the advisor, followed by the committee members and then the student. A meeting would be held later, with deadlines set. Their primary concern was ensuring fairness for both the supervisory committee and the student.
- Adam put the policy to a vote

All	}	That the revised policy be approved.
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Carried

Duration of Masters

Policy to reduce the required time to completion to 4 years for full-time master’s students while retaining the five-year limit for part-time students. Part of the revision includes extension for part-time students or Schedule B students who will have 5 years from initial registration, even if the same for full-time students are going down to four years as a kind of expected duration.

- Curtis said that a relatively small percentage of students in their program complete their programs within two years, but nearly all finish within three. Therefore, he questions the rationale of using the word "normal" in the revised policy language. Adam recommended replacing the word "normal" with a more appropriate term.
- Michael noted that the median completion time was about 2.6 years and suggested that it might be more accurate to describe thesis-based master's programs as taking 24 to 36 months. Adam agreed with this suggestion.
- Michael mentioned that most universities had a four-year completion timeline. University of Toronto and McMaster both specify four years as the required duration, whereas UBC is an outlier, with a five-year expectation.
- Michael explained the rationale for revising the phrasing from "for health or personal reasons including childbirth and having primary responsibility for the care of a child, must interrupt their studies" to simply "for health or personal reasons," as the original language was unclear in specifying the responsibilities around childbirth or primary caregiving that justified the change.
- Curtis asked if there were students who would be excluded by the revised policy. In his response, Michael emphasized the need to balance the interests of all students.
- Adam put the policy change to a vote

All	}	That the revised policy be approved.
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Carried

UBC Graduate Admissions Student Declaration

All applicants make a declaration through eVision. There is different version for UBC-O and V and the idea is to streamline the language. There are two main changes to the existing policy:

a) I certify that any information provided in written responses is accurate and the ideas represented in my responses are my own

b) To the best of my knowledge, I am not on any economic sanctions lists of Canada, the UN, the US, the EU, and the UK and, if I am admitted and register, my tuition fees and any other fees will not be paid directly or indirectly by a person, entity, or financial institution named on a previously named sanctions list.

- Many committee members had questions around the inclusion of UN, US, EU sanctions lists in the policy language. Patricia asked for some insight into the legal rationale behind this change. Commenting on the inclusion of UK, EU and US law, Jie said that most of these provisions are not even laws, they are executive orders and departmental policies.
- Michael said G+PS could either get more info on these points and have an eVote or wait until the next meeting. Adam agreed with that and said he would reach out to Jens Locher for more information.

Duration of PhD

- Jie asked about the duration of PhD program – Allard School has some PhD students staying in their program for over 10 years. She asked if there was a limit to how long they could stay there for? Michael said there was none. The maximum duration permitted for doctoral students was 6 years but extensions get requested and get approved all the time. He further said this was one of the reasons why G+PS was trying to clean up language around the definition of progress.

G+PS Members

- Michael walked the Committee members through the [G+PS members](#) section of the Academic Calendar to have a discussion on changing the current structure. He laid out his vision for these changes as such: The main goal is to split it into three policies – one for teaching of graduate students, the other for membership in G+PS, and the third one for supervision of graduate students. The goal of the supervision is to talk more about the expectations and the structure of the committee.
- Michael shares examples of the membership structure at:
 - UBC-O Senate Policy O-9 – they have created three levels of membership (we only have one), supervisory, co-supervisory and Committee membership
 - UoT – Full GFM, Associate GFM, Associate GFM (Restricted)

He then conducted a straw poll to gauge the thoughts of Committee members on doctoral supervision roles without G+PS approval. Committee members indicate different level of acceptance for different roles (sole supervision, co-supervision, committee member) and different faculty groups (G+PS members, COGS members, UBC Educational Leadership, etc.)

- Curtis mentioned the role of government scientists in co-supervisory capacity and Michael added a new category 'Non-UBC, non-faculty, scholars' to accommodate that.
- Patricia asked if the resulting policy would have a provision for students to have the permission to change a committee member if they felt they were not able to work together or if there were some other challenges. Michael said that is reflected in the fair practice provision.

5. **ADJOURNMENT**

Adam delivered the closing remarks and the meeting was adjourned at 3:27pm.