

‘MINUTES

Meeting of the Graduate Academic Policy Committee Monday, 13 March 2023, 12.30-13.50

Location: Zoom

Present: Michael Hunt (Chair), Susan Porter, Jolanta Aleksejuniene, Christiane Hoppmann, Teresa Dobson, Davide Elmo, Shannon Hagerman, Miriam Spering, Curtis Suttle, Sumeet Gulati, Max Read, Jennifer Fletcher (guest), Robyn Starkey (guest), Julian Dierkes (guest), Jenny Phelps (guest)

Regrets: Murray Carlson, Bruce MacDougall, Thomas Chang,

1. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

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

Carried

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

		<i>That the minutes be approved, with the following additions:</i>
<i>All</i>	}	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Discussion re: BPOC funding allocations ii) Discussion re: collaborative research theses iii) Postdoctoral fellows on supervisory committees

Carried

3. POLICY-RELATED ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

University Examiner eligibility on doctoral exams – Eligibility Changes

- Michael presented an update on discussions regarding changing the arm’s length criteria for University Examiners. Numerous conversations have been had, including with G+PS personnel, this current committee, Graduate Council, and individual programs. There is rationale and support in maintaining two University Examiners to ensure a balance in the examination committee, but stakeholders consistently report that it is increasingly difficult to find two University Examiners who meet the current arm’s length requirements – namely the provision to have no co-authored publications with the supervisor(s). Amongst other reasons, this is inconsistent with current trends towards team/collaborative research.
- Michael proposes that we enforce the following arm’s length criteria for University Examiners (note: strikethrough = proposed removed text; bold = proposed added text):
 - University Examiners must not be (or have been) members of the Supervisory Committee, or have been connected with the **formal planning or examination of the dissertation** research in any way.

- They should not a **real or perceived conflict of interest** with the Candidate. or Research Supervisor(s).
- Except in special circumstances (fully justified in writing) **at least one must not** have been a research collaborators and/or co-authors with the Supervisor(s) within the past 6 years, regardless of whether the collaborations relate to the Candidate’s dissertation work.

<i>All</i>	}	<i>That the motion be carried in principle. Michael to work on wording and present back to group for final approval.</i>
------------	---	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Carried

Applicant Declarations

- Michael presents a proposal to clarify the language in the Calendar to clarify that all applicants must disclose all post-secondary history, including consequences for failure to do so; also adds language that is consistent with what applicants must confirm on eVision, as well as changes header from “Student Declaration” to “Applicant Declaration”

<i>All</i>	}	<i>That the motion be carried.</i>
------------	---	------------------------------------

Carried

4. OTHER ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

BPOC Graduate Excellence Award

- Teresa initiates a discussion on the recent BPOC Graduate Excellence Award. One question is whether the BPOC distribution should follow a different process as other awards, such as the 4YF.
 - Julian indicates that allocation information for this award will eventually be sent out at the same time as similar information for GSI and 4YF in August
- Julian confirms that after the first iteration of this award, there will be further discussion as to optimal adjudication and allocation procedures.
- Julian also confirms that there will be \$500k annually for this award and that it will be in place for five years, pending a permanent commitment.
- Another issue is whether this award should reward previous program advances in this area, or encourage future change?
- Collecting and disseminating accurate demographic data at the program level is still a challenge. G+PS may be able to compile this information for next year based on current applications and admissions via eVision.
- **Action item: Julian will send out the exact wording used in eVision re: self-identification.**
- Another suggestion is to have clear deadlines in advance of this award allocation for when demographic data should be provided to the disciplinary Faculties – will help with distributing Faculty-level allocations.

General doctoral examination discussion

- Michael presents an update on ongoing discussions regarding changes to the doctoral examination process, including updates to messaging and communication between G+PS and students/supervisors, as well as G+PS now coordinating distribution of the dissertation document for examination to University Examiners (previously supervisors were responsible for this).
- One issue that has been increasing in frequency is requests for exceptions to the policy requiring External Examiners to “hold a PhD or a degree at the same level which the Candidate is pursuing”. Certain programs are likely unable to find many eligible External Examiners based on the field (eg. Doctor of Musical Arts), and Michael has seen a number of requests for appropriate individuals who hold an MD, but not PhD. In all cases, Michael has required evidence of previous PhD supervision and/or examination experience to support the request; however, the question is whether we should change the requirement from “PhD” to “doctoral degree”.
- **Action item: Michael to continue to hold discussions on this topic to gauge interest and identify any potential challenges.**
- There was also a discussion about public attendance at examinations. While closure of doctoral exams to the public have occurred in the past only for safety or other similar concerns, giving students the option to not publicize exams began with the switch to online/hybrid exams at the start of the pandemic. There have been discussions to whether we should continue providing this option.
- There was much agreement regarding the benefits of having doctoral examinations open to the public.
- It was decided to revert back to the original policy and only approve closed examinations with sound rationales.
- **Action item: Doctoral exams team to remove option to have exam closed to public on doctoral bookings form. They will also begin to track the frequency and reasons for requests to hold closed-door examinations. Michael will report back to this committee periodically with updated data.**

Postdoctoral fellows on supervisory committees

- Michael raised the issue of whether PDFs should be eligible to participate on graduate student supervisory committees. Our current policies permit their inclusion, but as non-members of G+PS. UBC-O policy does not permit this.
- There was discussion as to how power dynamics and COIs could result in sub-optimal student mentoring.
- Susan is supportive of continuing with permitting PDFs to serve, but developing clear management strategy guidance may be a good idea.
- **Action item: Michael to look into how best to develop guidelines.**

Re-taking graduate courses for higher grades

- Michael and Max raised the issue of the appropriateness of graduate students re-taking courses that they have passed for higher grades. While policy states that “where a [failing]

grade is obtained in a course, and on the recommendation of the graduate program and the approval of the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, the student may repeat the course for higher standing or take an alternate course”, there is no explicit mention of what is/is not permitted in cases where a passing grade has been obtained.

- The general consensus of the discussion was that this isn't a big issue. As long as the transcript reflects that the course was taken twice, and that acquired credits can only be used once towards degree requirements, no policy change is recommended.

5. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 1:50pm.