**MINUTES**

**Meeting of the Graduate Academic Policy Committee**

**Wednesday, 12 December 2022, 12.30-13.50**

Location: Zoom

**Present:** Michael Hunt (Chair), Teresa Dobson, Mark MacLachlan, Thomas Chang, Murray Carlson, Davide Elmo, Calvin Roskelley, Max Read, Jolanta Aleksejuniene, Arafat Safdar**,** Robyn Starkey (Guest)

1. **ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

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| *All* | } | *That the agenda be approved.* |

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| Carried |

1. **ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

**Doctoral examination policies and procedures**

* Michael presents the September 2021- August 2022 Doctoral Exams report –
  + low number of examinations compared to the last 5 academic years – Teresa asks about the funding in relation to the low number of exams (units in her faculty have reduced the admission to meet the minimum funding).
  + other potential reasons could include COVID research curtailment now starting to materialize as delayed completion times; will keep an eye on 2023 frequencies.
  + discussion around increased External Examiner involvement – likely due to convenience of Zoom-based exams.
* Robyn proposes a change to the section of *Approval of Doctoral Dissertation for External Examiners* – Instead of asking for the names of all the committee members to confirm that they have all read the dissertation and approved it, it would be better to just state that the program requirements have been met and have the supervisor sign the document - Mark, Davide, Cal support that – Michael is concerned that there may be too much onus on the supervisor – Teresa thinks the current document is helpful in making sure that the thesis has been read by the committee members because some committee members had complained in the past about not having received the dissertation in time.
  + Option could be to ensure that the majority of the committee has approved the exam; key principle will be to ensure that supervisory committee supports sending the document for examination vs. potential for delay if one committee member is slow to respond.
* Michael presents an overview of the UBC-V Doctoral Exams process.
  + Key thing to look for around the eligibility of External Examiners is their involvement in *PhD training*, and this is an important consideration when Michael is approached for exceptions to eligibility (i.e. Assistant Professors or individuals without an academic appointment) – Cal thinks this needs to be made clear to the supervisors because they lay more emphasis on the *expertise* – Davide, Mark and Tom also agree.
  + Jolanta asks about the Emeritus professors as External Examiners – Michael says they would be accepted – She also makes a suggestion that the supervisor should not be reaching out to the examiners so as to avoid any conflict of interest and that a summary of thesis could be sent to the potential examiners to help them make a decision – Michael agrees but Robyn says the summary is often not ready by the time the invitation is sent out – Cal also agrees with Jolanta and thinks it does not have to be final summary but a basic overview of the thesis could be shared with the potential external examiners – Teresa also supports this.
* Do students need to know about the external examiners? Current process is to inform students after the External Examiner has agreed. Jolanta highlights both the positive as well as the negative aspects of this – Mark shows his support for the *status quo* – Teresa agrees with Mark and considers it important for students to know about the external examiner.
* Michael brings up the timing of confirming University Examiners in relation to booking the exam – currently supervisors (and students) have the ability to request a booking for the oral examination prior to sending in the University Examiner form. This could create potential delays in the exam if the University examiner form is late, or if there are exceptions requested.
  + Michael suggests ensuring that the examination committee (External Examiner, University Examiners, Supervisory Committee Examiners) is confirmed and approved prior to booking the oral defence date/time. This suggestion is supported by the group.
* University examiners - Michael facilitated a discussion regarding the role of University examiners, namely the number required and the eligibility criteria.
  + Davide do not support the idea of requiring two completely arms-length University Examiners as that may discourage collaboration amongst researchers. Mark doesn’t like requiring two full arms-length University Examiners for a variety of reasons. Some questioned the relevance of the second University Examiner if there is a large gap between expertise.
  + Michael - we must ensure a fair and balanced examination committee, and do not want those directly involved (Supervisor and Supervisory Committee) to greatly outnumber the arm’s-length voting members of the examination committee.
  + Jolanta proposes a more balanced composition with a minimum of two non-supervisory committee examiners (one External + one University Examiner, or two University Examiners) and argues that this will allow for a more elaborate and in-depth discussion – Cal supports this suggestion and wonders whether that may be a mechanism for more External Examiner involvement– Michael calls for further discussion on this.
  + Teresa - we may wish to consider more flexibility for University Examiners outside the graduate program – maybe reduce or remove the arm’s-length collaboration criterion. There was much support for considering this.
  + Michael plans to look into what other Universities across Canada are doing, and will report back at the next Policy meeting.

1. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:00pm.