



Graduate Education Council

Tuesday, October 22, 2024
1:00 - 3:00 p.m., Microsoft Teams

The Dean welcomed new and continuing members to the first meeting of the 2024-2025 academic year.

1. Approval of the Agenda of Graduate Education Meeting of October 22, 2024

MOTION (*duly moved by Professor Vina Goghari and seconded by Professor John Peever*)

THAT the agenda of the Graduate Education Council meeting of October 22, 2024, as circulated with the agenda, be approved.

The motion is **CARRIED, unanimous.**

2. Dean's Remarks (Joshua Barker)

One of GEC's responsibilities is the approval of policy, regulation, and guidelines affecting graduate studies at U of T. In the case of SGS regulations in the Graduate Calendar, Council will have final approval authority. Proposals for new guidelines and documents reflecting best practices or changes to existing ones are brought to GEC for information, consultation, and discussion. GEC provides valuable advice to administrators and the graduate community. Members are encouraged to view the orientation video on the [Graduate Education Council](#) website.

- i. **Provostial Priorities** – The Dean presented the Provostial Priorities, highlighting the importance of thriving graduate and undergraduate students, empowering research trainees, channeling AI possibilities, and charting the future of higher education. Members are encouraged to engage in the work of the related Task Forces during the community consultation phase.
 - a. **Thriving Graduate and Undergraduate Students:** Transform thinking about mental health and accessibility towards a broader approach towards student success; and Expand student residences and enhance learning spaces for both graduate and undergraduate communities.
 - b. **Empowering Research Trainees:** Increase funding for research-stream graduate students and campus based postdoctoral researchers; Understand diversity of challenges for research and address barriers; Continue to commitment to Towards 2030 aim of intensifying graduate enterprise; and attract the best international graduate students.
 - c. **Channelling the Possibilities of AI:** Equip faculty with best practices on course and assessments design in the era of generative AI; and Build AI literacy and develop a framework for ensuring academic integrity with increased availability of new AI technologies.
 - d. **Charting the Future of Higher Ed:** Foster dialogue on difficult subjects and affirm the critical value of higher education to society; and develop lifelong learning opportunities that prepare students for evolving success.
- ii. **Graduate Funding Increase: Update** – The Dean referred to the report of the [Graduate Funding Working Group](#), the recommendations, and shared data points from student surveys noting the need to increase UofT differentiation from other Canadian universities and compete for top talent. The proposed increase aims to raise the base funding commitment for PhD and SJD students in the funded cohort to \$40,000 inclusive of tuition, effective Fall 2025. SGS acknowledges potential challenges, including the financial pressure on operating funds and the need for a coordinated and transparent approach from all stakeholders. Members expressed anticipatory fear about the details of the increase rollout at division and departmental levels, the impact on research grants, as well as the commitment for doctoral students beyond their funded years.
- iii. **Parental Support for Postdoctoral Fellows** – The Postdoctoral Working Group recommended that SGS review parental leave policies for non-tri-agency trainees on a case-by-case basis to ensure equity with those provided to tri-

agency postdoctoral scholars. She will extend its Parental Grant program to non-tri-agency funded trainees. Program details are being finalized and will be reported at the next meeting.

- iv. **Graduate Admissions: Update** - Assistant Dean, B. Desrosiers-Tam provided an update on graduate admissions, noting stable numbers for doctoral and research master's applications and enrolments, with a slight drop in yield rates.
- v. **Declined Applicant Survey: Results** – B. Desrosiers-Tam presented findings from the declined applicant survey, highlighting that the top reasons for declining offers included better funding packages and preferred location. This survey will be conducted regularly to support decision-making for future recruitment efforts.

3. Report of Vice-Dean, Research and Program Innovation – Vina Goghari

- i. **Final Oral Examination (FOE) - Working Group** – Professor V. Goghari provided an update on the final oral examination review, noting the importance of celebrating the process and ensuring disciplinary and programmatic flexibility. The Working Group is evaluating different models for the chair of the FOE, considering academic rigor, wellness, professional development, and operational efficiency. Council members are encouraged to reach out to Professor Goghari with feedback.
- ii. **Graduate Faculty Membership (GFM) Websites** – In collaboration with the Office of the Vice-Provost, Faculty and Academic Life, GFM guidelines were updated to better define the various roles in graduate education. A new [website](#) provides tools to support their implementation.
- iii. **Portfolio Updates:**
 - a. **Conversations with SGS** is a monthly series for graduate faculty leaders which provides an opportunity for professional development. Monthly sessions provide an opportunity for graduate faculty leaders to learn more about issues. Starting with orientation in the fall, other topics included: Graduate Academic Appeals, GFMs, Civil Discourse on Campus, and Graduate Student Inclusion in Grants.
 - b. **Graduate Education Innovation Fund (GEIF)** – The purpose the GEIF is to enrich the learning experience of graduate students by funding initiatives that create positive, innovative changes in the design and delivery of graduate education at the University of Toronto. This three-year pilot project launched in Fall 2021 is now a permanent program. More information [is found here](#).

4. Report of Vice-Dean, Students (John Peever)

- i. **Use of Copy Editors for Graduate Theses** – In response to questions from divisions around whether graduate students are permitted to use external copy editors to assist in refining their graduate theses, SGS has developed a communication which was distributed with the agenda. The final version is posted on the Thesis & Dissertation Writing Support website [here](#).
- ii. **Annual Report - Centre for Graduate Mentorship and Supervision (Aziza Kajan)** – Distributed with the agenda was the 2023-2024 Annual Report from the Centre for Graduate Mentorship and Supervision. This Centre supports interpersonal skill development and successful supervisory relationships. The Director, A. Kajan, provided an overview of CGMS, noting that it works with students, faculty, and chairs to address interpersonal conflicts and academic concerns. Since July 2023, CGMS has had ~385 consultations with a focus on providing support during critical milestones and periods of heightened stress. CGMS offers coaching, problem-solving, and risk assessment and works closely with other offices on campus to provide comprehensive support for the graduate community.

5. Motions

- i. **Non-Standard Admissions & Programs Committee (NSA&P) Membership**

The Dean called on Professor Vina Goghari to present the motion.

MOTION THAT the Graduate Education Council approve the appointment of two divisional members and two graduate student members to the Non-Standard Admissions and Programs Committee for the 2024-2025 academic year.

MOTION (*duly moved and seconded by Professor John Peever*)

GEC approval is final. There being no further discussion, the Dean called the vote. The motion was **CARRIED, unanimous.**

ii. **Graduate Academic Appeals Board (GAAB) Membership**

The Dean called on Professor Vina Goghari to present the motion.

MOTION THAT Graduate Education Council approve the appointment of one student member to serve on the Graduate Academic Appeals Board for the 2024-2025 academic year.

MOTION (*duly moved and seconded by Professor John Peever*)

GEC approval is final. There being no further discussion, the Dean called the vote. The motion was **CARRIED, unanimous.**

CONSENT AGENDA

6. **Report of the Previous Meeting: Graduate Education Council – May 21, 2024** – The report of the previous meeting was distributed with the agenda package. No members requested to discuss items. The report is accepted/approved.
7. **Business Arising from the Previous Meeting** – There was no business arising from the report of the previous meeting.
8. **Reports for Distribution** – The following reports were distributed in advance of the meeting: Graduate Education Council Membership 2024-2025; Graduate Academic Appeals Annual Report 2023-2024; Code of Behavior on Academic Matters Annual Report 2023-2024; Graduate Centre for Academic Communications Annual Report 2023-2024; and Centre for Graduate Mentorship and Supervision 2023-2024. Feedback is welcome to sgs.dean@utoronto.ca.

END OF CONSENT AGENDA

9. **Date of Next Meeting: March 18, 2025**

10. **Other Business**

11. **Adjournment**

The Dean called on Professor Vina Goghari to present the motion.

MOTION that the Graduate Education Council meeting of October 22, 2024, be adjourned.

MOTION (*duly moved and seconded by Professor John Peever*)

There being no further discussion or questions, the Dean thanked Council members for their participation and adjourned the meeting. (2:49 p.m.)



Appendix to the Minutes
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO - GRADUATE EDUCATION COUNCIL
Record of Attendance – October 22, 2024
Microsoft Teams

Present

(Voting Members)

Abdolhosseini, Mohaddeseh
Ali, Ameer
Barker, Joshua (Chair, *ex-officio*)
Busmann, Markus
Dockery, Myles
Ensminger, Beate
Gniadek, Melissa
Goghari, Vina (*ex-officio*)
Jacks II, David
Jerrard, Robert
Kim, Junchul
Klassen, Pamela
Kohn, Peggy
Kundur, Deepa
Kushner, Paul
Lee, Nana (Hyung Ran)
Milkie, Melissa
Nickel, Julian
Ossher, Lynn
Peever, John (*ex-officio*)
Psarianos, Thomas
Reke Avikpe, Ferdinand
Sibia, Naaz
Tokmarkjian, Levon
Wakefield, Sarah
Wells, Brandon

Present

(Non-Voting Members)

Attridge, Michael
Baluyut, Ed
Brudno, Michael
Cayley, Rachael
Corson, Tim
DeClou, Lindsay
Desrosiers-Tam, Brian
Elliot, Robin
Flessa, Joseph
Freeman, Jane
Hampton, Brenda
Harrison, Rene
Heximer, Dianne (*Secretary to Council*)
Kajan, Aziza
Katz, Larissa
Kishen, Aneil
Lee, Eunjung
MacPherson, Ellen
Pais, Lauren
Peake, Sarah
Plata, Angelique
Rao, Ajay
Smith, Natasha
Stathopoulos, Laura
St-Cyr, Olivier
Widger, Kim

Absent

(Voting Members)

Alford, Larry (*ex-officio*)
Arhonditsis, George
Atkinson, Michael
Dionne, Anne-Katherine
Gertler, Meric (*ex-officio*)
Kugamoorthy, Brenaven
Miller, Jeannie
Miller, Michael
Muscat, Meagan
Ross, Jill
Ruocco, Anthony
Schuurmans, Carol
Ssali, Henry
Wane, Njoki
Young, Trevor (*ex-officio*)