

# Meeting Notes

## Graduate Education Council

Tuesday, April 28, 2020

The Dean called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. and welcomed members and visitors.

The Dean began the meeting by acknowledging the land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit River. Today, this meeting place is still home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work and study on this land.

### 1) Approval of the Agenda of the Graduate Education (GEC) Meeting of April 28, 2020.

**MOTION** (*duly moved by Professor Charmaine Williams and seconded by Professor Gretchen Kerr*)

THAT the agenda of the Graduate Education Council meeting of April 28, 2020 as circulated with the agenda, be approved.

The motion is **CARRIED, unanimous.**

### 2) Approval of the Minutes of the Graduate Education Council Meeting of February 18, 2020.

The Dean noted that the minutes of the February 18, 2020 meeting were distributed with the agenda.

**MOTION** (*duly moved by Professor Charmaine Williams and seconded by Professor Gretchen Kerr*)

THAT the minutes of the Graduate Education Council meeting of February 18, 2020, be approved.

The motion is **CARRIED, unanimous.**

### 3) Business Arising from the Minutes

There was no business arising from the minutes.

### 4) Dean's Remarks

#### a) COVID-19: SGS Response

- i) **SGS Website** – A COVID-specific webpage was created for new and current graduate students, staff and graduate faculty, which contains information and updates as well as a FAQ and Dean's messages to the community.
- ii) **Meetings** - SGS retained existing structures with frequent meetings of the SGS Council of Graduate Deans, the UTGSU Executive, and the Graduate Student Advisory Committee, which is advisory to the SGS Dean. Vice-Presidents Goel and Regehr are leading institutional working groups, with several sub-working groups ensuring a clear and consistent University response.
- iii) **Supporting Students** – SGS operations quickly and effectively moved online, including front-facing Student Services, and Final Oral Examinations. A sub-group under the Vice-Provost Academic Programs, the Academic Continuity Group, helped units navigate completion of the Winter term, and is now addressing issues for the Summer and Falls terms. A group within SGS is looking at research continuity issues at the graduate level, particularly in the research stream Masters and PhD programs
- iv) **Mentorship/Supervision from a Distance** –The Vice-Dean Students created resources to remind faculty and students of the importance of communication in this new environment. The online version of the annual mentoring form, Progress Tracker.

- v) **Funding and Finances** - The Financial Aid office has been working with students requiring financial advising. Emergency bursaries and loans have been seen a dramatic increase in terms of need. UofT Financial Services has taken the step to waive service charges for amounts owing on student accounts.
  - vi) **Academic Continuity** - The focus at this time is getting students finished up for the term and planning for the summer term. When looking at courses, an issue that emerged was the ability to offer a credit/no credit option, which was impossible for SGS to offer without governance approval. On the research side, a group of Graduate Dean's and representatives from across the university, is looking at the question of how to handle the fact that a lot of graduate research was impeded due to laboratory closures, travel restrictions for those whose research included international travel, and the impact of physical distancing on domestic fieldwork. In the professional programs there is a challenge where a large component of experiential learning, such as placements or internships, and how to adapt to the new situation.
  - vii) **SGS Response/Plans Going Forward** - The University is now pivoting to consider and plan for the restart and recovery. The Graduate Research Continuity Committee will be thinking about both the longer-term impacts of this pause in research, but also the staged return and recovery. The first phase will start with opening activated deemed essential, possibly small retail, construction sites, manufacturing, some parks reopening. In a second phase, there will be an expanded list of essential services, some government and retail reopening, and likely it will be in that phase where the University begins a staged reopening on campus. In the third phase, most businesses will reopen, and there is likely to be constraints in terms of physical distancing measures. Travel restrictions are likely to remain in place for some time because the epidemic is unfolding in different countries very differently, with different responses. SGS continues to monitor the situation and develop responsive solutions.
- b) **Working Group on Graduate Student Research Opportunities in Industry** - This working group was chaired jointly by SGS and the Office of the Vice-President Research and Innovation. Membership included Graduate Chairs, Graduate Dean's, and Graduate students. The key aims were: i) to ensure that student participation in such research opportunities is consistent with the University's mission, its policies, and with the highest standards of academic integrity. The main areas of focus that the working group felt needed attention was to ensure that all opportunities are consistent with the University policies on academic freedom and integrity. This relates particularly to policies around the free exchange of ideas, and the timely dissemination of research results through publication. The integrity of the educational process should not be compromised by the goals of the private-sector entity. ii) the need to ensure that student academic progression is a priority in decision making as projects and partnerships unfold; and iii) the need for greater transparency for students about these opportunities, the funding structure, and changes to the project focus.
  - c) **SGS Data Dashboards** - The SGS [data website](#) will soon include information on admissions, student retention, and completion within doctoral programs. This work is aligned with a consortium of universities who are committed to making data public with a shared methodology, [Next Generation Life Sciences Consortium](#).
  - d) **The Essential Guide for Graduate Students** will move to an online format in order to improve accessibility.
  - e) **Healthy Labs Initiative** - Professor Reinhart Reithmeier, Special Advisor to the Dean, has been working on this initiative focused on creating a healthy labs approach at this university. This work involved conducting consultations with focus groups of stakeholders that included graduate students, postdocs, lab technicians, lab managers, supervisors, graduate chairs, and various support offices. Professor Reithmeier will draft a report with recommendations toward growing a healthy lab culture here at U of T. One of the recommendations will be to aligning what we are doing at U of T with the broader [Dimensions](#) initiative. SGS will develop a Healthy Lab Charter based on equity, diversity, inclusion and wellness principles that are also part of Dimensions, will identify gaps in the resources and policy that present barriers to healthy labs at the University, and will identify global best practices and training for lab management, conflict resolution, and mentoring. Work is nearly complete in terms of the report and recommendations. There will be a response from the Dean and we will move to the implementation stage.
  - f) **Final Oral Examinations** – Starting March 18, 147 doctoral final oral examinations have taken place remotely or been postponed.

## 5) SGS Updates

### a) Vice-Dean Students

- i) **Mental Health Working Group** - This committee is comprised of graduate students, graduate administrators graduate chairs, and Student Life staff who work with graduate students. Despite impacts experienced due to COVID-19, the group remains committed to delivering recommendations in June 2020. COVID-19 has not diminished concerns about student mental health; rather it has increased stress, and revealed some areas in which the University needs to strengthen responses to stressors faced by graduate students.
- ii) Mentioned previously at GEC, the **Centre for Graduate Mentorship and Supervision (CGMS)** is expected to launch in Fall 2020, with input from the graduate community about what they would like to see in CGMS. The Centre will create resources for students, supervisors and faculty members; develop new content based on input from the University of Toronto Community; and plan online workshops, seminars, and Lunch and Learn events.

### b) Vice-Dean Programs

- i) **Dissertation Working Group** - An environmental scan to learn what UofT divisions are doing, as well as other universities in Canada and internationally, was very informative. Common dissertation outcomes, and common denominators in terms of outcome expectations regardless of discipline or dissertation format, are being discussed. Given that some students may have their dissertation work interrupted, the question of whether sufficient work has been done, and whether the outcomes have been sufficiently met, will become more important than ever. The Working Group is looking to provide better descriptions, for students and supervisors, regarding the expectations around different formats and structures for the dissertation. Linked to the expectations, SGS is developing guidelines for examiners, for each of the different formats of dissertation. The Working Group will also consider how to respond to TRC with respect to the dissertation.
- ii) **GCAC and GPS Programming Transitioned Online** – Last year SGS did an external review of the Graduate Center for Academic Communications, GCAC, and the Graduate Professional Skills programs. Recommendations from those reviews included moving programming online, for the purposes of increasing equitable access across different student populations. COVID-19 capitulated this work, and we have seen tremendous increases in student demand in both areas. Summer offerings in both areas will also be increased.
- iii) **Constitution and By-Laws Review Working Group** – Review of these documents is taking place, and motions to revise these documents will come forward next term.
- iv) **Three-Minute Thesis** - SGS held a very successful Three-Minute Thesis on April 2, 2020, with over 400 viewers via Zoom and Facebook. Two journalists from CBC Radio who produce Ideas, a show that takes dissertation ideas and makes them into broader shows on CBC Radio, participated as judges.

## 6) Motions

### a) New Calendar Regulations - 6.2.10 Credit/No Credit (CR/NCR)

The Dean called on Professor Charmaine Williams to present the first motion

MOTION #1

THAT subject to the approval of the proposed amendments to the *University Assessment and Grading Practices Policy* by the Academic Board,

THAT the Proposal to Create a Credit/No Credit Graduate Regulation, as outlined in the memorandum from the School of Graduate Studies, dated April 27, 2020, be approved, effective January 1, 2020.

The motion text was distributed with the agenda package. A member asked how this differs from CR/NCR in undergraduate courses and who makes the determination to offer CR/NCR. Graduate Units will determine which courses in which to offer the CR/NCR. This is important because of considerations, i.e., professional accreditation,

where grades may be needed in courses and the CR/NCR would negate accreditation. The Graduate emphasis on research is also more difficult and complicated to grade, as a CR/NCR. Some Graduate Units saw this option as negatively impacting students, while others feel there was no disadvantage. To account for the diversity, and the potential outcomes for students, the initial decision will be made at the Graduate Unit level. An appeals process is not envisioned, other than the usual petition processes that Units have, under individual circumstances. SGS is working with the Transcript Office to identify a deadline by which students can select CR/NCR for their winter courses.

**MOTION** (*duly moved and seconded by Professor Gretchen Kerr*)

The motion was **CARRIED, unanimous**.

b) **SGS Calendar Updates:**

The SGS Calendar outlines the policies and regulations for graduate students entering a program. The wording of this 'contract' is significant as it governs their program and is the point of reference during the academic appeals process. As a matter of practice, content is reviewed to ensure clarity. The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education has identified a regulation that required further clarification. Circulated with the agenda was a summary of these proposed changes.

The Dean called on Professor Charmaine Williams to present the second motion

MOTION #2

THAT Graduate Education Council approve the proposal to revise entries in the 2020-2021 SGS Calendar.

THAT Graduate Education Council approve the changes to:

- Section 2.3 (Visiting Students Section);
- Section 4.3 (English-Language Proficiency); and
- Section 8.4 (Submissions of Theses)

**MOTION** (*duly moved and seconded by Professor Gretchen Kerr*)

Seeing no discussion, the Dean called the vote.

The motion was **CARRIED, unanimous**.

c) **Graduate Academic Appeals Board (GAAB) Membership**

The Dean advised that the Graduate Academic Appeals Board (GAAB) is a standing committee of the Graduate Education Council. The motion documentation distributed with the agenda provides details regarding the new faculty members to serve on GAAB for the 2020-2021 academic year. GEC is the final approval level for these Committee appointments.

The Dean called on Professor Charmaine Williams to present the third motion

MOTION #3

THAT Graduate Education Council approve the appointment of six faculty members to serve on the Graduate Academic Appeals Board for the 2020-2021 academic year.

Graduate Faculty Members (Division 1)

- Greig Henderson, English (July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2023)
- Paul Thompson, History and Philosophy of Science & Technology (July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2023)
- Keren Rice, Linguistics (July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2023)

Graduate Faculty Members (Division 2)

- Lynne Howarth, Information (July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2023)

Graduate Faculty Members (Division 3)

- Chris Damaren, Aerospace Studies (July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2023)
- Willy Wong, Electrical and Computer Engineering (July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021)

**MOTION** (*duly moved and seconded by Professor Gretchen Kerr*)

There being no discussion, the Dean called the vote.

The motion was **CARRIED, unanimous**.

d) **Temporary exemption for the Faculty of Law to grant a second deferral**

The Dean called on Professor Charmaine Williams to present the fourth motion

MOTION #4

THAT the Graduate Education Council of the School of Graduate Studies approve granting the Faculty of Law a temporary exemption from the existing SGS regulation on deferrals ([regulation 3.3](#)) to allow approval of deferral of admission for up to 24 months from the original commencement date, for the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 admission cycles.

**MOTION** (*duly moved and seconded by Professor Gretchen Kerr*)

There being no discussion, the Dean called the vote.

The motion was **CARRIED, unanimous**.

**7) COVID-19 Listening & Discussion Session**

The Dean invited members to share issues arising in their Units relating to the current COVID-19 climate. While the Dean meets regularly with Graduate Chairs and student groups it is helpful for SGS to be aware of challenges amongst the various cohorts and programs. Feedback ensures the development of a coordinated University response to allow faculties and departments to address specific needs in their own areas. The University needs to consider long-term resources implications going forward and ensure structures are in place so students have pathways to be heard and to shape decisions being made.

**8) Other Business**

A member shared that allegations relating to union practices during the 2019-2020 UTGSU elections will be discussed at a meeting this evening.

There was no other business.

## 9) Reports for Distribution

Full reports were distributed with the agenda for information. Feedback is welcome to [sgs.dean@utoronto.ca](mailto:sgs.dean@utoronto.ca).

- a. Report on Postdoctoral Fellows 2018-19
- b. Report on Graduate Admissions, Registration and Graduation Trends 2019-20
- c. 2018-19 SGS Admissions & Programs Committee: Executive Summary and Report
- d. Graduate Award Report on New Internal Awards 2019
- e. Graduate Award Report on Federal and Provincial Awards 2019-20

## 10) Closing Remarks

There being no further discussion or questions, the Dean thanked Council members for their participation and adjourned the meeting.



Appendix to the Minutes  
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO - GRADUATE EDUCATION COUNCIL  
Record of Attendance – April 28, 2020

**Present**

(Voting & Non-Voting Members)

Alford, Larry (*ex-officio*)  
Audet, Julie  
Barker, Joshua (Chair)  
Benjamin, Dwayne  
Bertrand, Jacques  
Brummell, Alice  
Buck, Leslie  
Burnes, David  
Cadarettee, Suzanne  
Chang, Samantha Chiu-Yang  
Domloge, Hanan  
Dubber, Markus  
Evjen, John  
Gesink, Dionne  
Gu, Yi (Evie)  
Harrison, Timothy  
Hu, Jim  
Jenne, Amy  
Kamaleddin, Amin  
Kaplan, Allan  
Katz, Chaim  
Kerr, Gretchen (*ex-officio*)  
Labrie, Normand  
Lam, Ernie  
Levit, Robert  
Lyons, Kelly  
Mandhan, Sneha  
Milkie, Melissa  
Mou, Leping  
Murphy, Jennifer  
Packer, Jeremy  
Packman, Jeff  
Piquette-Miller, Micheline  
Pirvulescu, Mihela  
Ratto, Matt  
Rossini, Adriana  
Schmitt, Cannon

Sebastian, Agnes  
Sepielli, Andrew  
Shantz, Coleen (*ex-officio*)  
Silcox, Mary  
Simpson, Andre  
Stevenson, Siobhan  
Stirling, Ashley  
Thorburn, Malcolm  
Tourangeau, Ann  
Van Lieshout, Pascal  
Von Schütz, Konstanze  
Williams, Charmaine (*ex-officio*)

**Guests and SGS Staff**

Desrosiers-Tam, Brian  
Freeman, Jane  
Haley, Lisa  
Heximer, Dianne (*Secretary to Council*)  
Hurlihey, Victoria  
Lalonde, Josie  
Phillips, Jules  
Plata, Angelique  
Reichold, Kristen  
Sargsyan, Hasmik  
Stathopoulos, Laura  
Wagschal, David

**Absent**

Ball, Christopher (*ex-officio*)  
Boon, Heather  
Cote, Stephane  
Ken Corts  
Desrosiers, Nathalie  
Gertler, Meric (*ex-officio*)  
Goel, Vivek  
Lee, Chi-Guhn  
Mabury, Scott  
McCahan, Susan  
MacGregor, Robert  
Qiu, Lingling  
Quinonez, Carlos  
Steeves, Craig  
Regehr, Cheryl