

Meeting Notes
Graduate Education Council
Tuesday, April 20, 2021

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

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 20, 2021.

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

THAT the agenda of the Graduate Education Council meeting of April 20, 2021 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 23, 2021.

The Dean noted that the minutes of the February 23, 2021 meeting were distributed with the agenda.

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

THAT the minutes of the Graduate Education Council meeting of February 23, 2021. 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

- i. **COVID-19 Update:** As the GTA and Ontario have entered into enhanced measures, the University has undertaken an assessment to determine the impact on activities currently underway. The majority of campus-based activities are taking place online. Everything that can be done online has moved online, with the exception of some research activity taking places in labs across the campus, which are working at less than 50% of normal capacity with measures for social distancing and PPE in and effect. The changes do not affect the advice currently given although the enhanced policing powers caused some consternation within the community. There are a large number of variants of concern impacting different age groups than in previous waves. In response to expressions of concern received from graduate students, SGS is collaborating with the Vice President Research and Innovation on a communication to students and supervisors, reminding them to reassess the risks regarding their need to be on campus. Students will also be reminded that it is their right to decide whether they are going to attend campus or not. Planning for the Fall term is well underway. Activity during the summer months will continue to be online and travel restrictions continue to be effect through the summer. With the vaccination program rolling out, there is an aspiration to return to in-person learning in the fall, with modified social distancing and other measures. The University will continue to follow public health guidance.
- ii. **Collective Agreement Ratification Update:** From December through to March, extensive negotiations took place with CUPE 3902, the union representing Teaching Assistant and Course Instructors. Some highlights of the agreement that has been signed by both parties:
 - Enhanced training for TAs and course instructors that comes with additional contract hours,
 - More streamlined and centralized job posting process,
 - Clarification in the hiring criteria that are used,
 - Modification to the language and phrasing, and to some of the processes, to better reflect EDI needs.
 - Additional job security in the form of subsequent appointments for upper-year doctoral students

- Changes to the ways in which departmental funding practices will be published. Annual funding letters that graduate students receive will follow a restricted set of templates which include a lot of relevant information.
- iii. **SGS Online Admissions System:** Brian Desrosiers-Tam, Assistant Dean, provided an update on the new online graduate application system named SLATE. Led by SGS, this project will be implemented by an external consulting firm and informed by an Implementation Steering Committee composed of graduate chairs, coordinators, and administrators. Five graduate units participated in the pilot and have transitioned to this new mobile- and user-friendly platform. Graduate student applicants beginning in the Fall 2022 term will be in the new system. SGS will be asking demographic questions as part of the system; a report of this project will be presented at a future meeting. Before the end of May, SGS will be launching a website to track key milestones and FAQs.
 - iv. **Upcoming Admissions Numbers Report:** The Dean provided a view of current admissions statistics. The vast majority of applications are already in, offers are still going out and being accepted. SGS is seeing large increases, almost a third above normal number, of applications and far more acceptances over last year. The largest increase is seen in the professional programs and may be because people are concerned about the economy and are upgrading their training to prepare for careers.
 - v. **SGS Award Ceremony:** On April 22nd at 3:30 p.m., SGS will be holding a [virtual awards ceremony](#) to celebrate recipients of the many competitive awards administered by the team in the Graduate Awards Office.
 - vi. **UofT 2021 3MT Finals:** The Dean congratulated winners of the [2021 3MT Finals](#) and thanked Professor Gretchen Kerr, Mr. Liam O'Leary, staff in the Grad Room and at SGS who helped to make the event happen.
 - 1st place: Faraz Alidina from the Department of Near & Middle Eastern Civilizations,
 - 2nd place: Heather MacDonald from the Faculty of Music
 - 3rd Place: Julie Sato from the Department of Psychology and,
 - The People's Choice Award: Emily McGaugh from the Department of Physiology.
 - vii. **Student Experience Surveys:**
 - The **SGS Pulse Survey**, presented at prior meetings, is now published on the [SGS website](#).
 - The **Graduate Student Experience in the Research University (gradSERU)** survey closes at midnight on April 20th. There has been a 24.4% response rate, close to the 2017 response rate of 25%. Graduate students were given the opportunity to customize their final reminders. Feedback provided will serve as an invaluable insight to the graduate community, UofT and student views on programs, services, research, supervision and mentorship. SGS will receive and digest institutional results to be shared with graduate units in the fall term.

5) SGS Updates

- i. **Vice Dean, Programs & Innovation, Professor Gretchen Kerr**
 - Professor Kerr notified Council that the [Dissertation Guidelines](#), generated by the working group are now on the SGS website. The Working Group was established to develop clarity, in format and structure, of the doctoral thesis, given the changes in the graduate education landscape and interests in more diverse methodologies responding to the TRC. The guidelines identify the required academic criteria for doctoral theses, identify acceptable formats and structures, and they provide guidance on the decision-making processes with respect to formats and structures. This document may be particularly helpful during the pandemic when doctoral students have not necessarily been able to carry out their dissertations as planned, and there needs to be decisions around how to finish in a different way.
- ii. **Director, Graduate Centre for Academic Communication, Professor Jane Freeman**
 - There has been an increase in demand for [GCAC](#) programming this year as students in isolation sought writing/speaking support in high numbers. To meet students at the point of demand, extra workshops were added. Offering online GCAC courses/workshops access was improved for students at UTM and UTSC, as well as for student in other time zones. An Educational Technologist has been hired for one year to assist with balancing the demands of in-person versus remote access, student convenience, community building and improve teaching effectiveness in online offerings. Permission has been received to hire a three-year Teaching-Stream CLTA to be cross-appointed with the Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering. This individual will help develop programming for graduate academic writing and speaking that is specific to engineering students. There is clear potential post-COVID for designing GCAC programming that combines the best of both online and in-person synchronous and asynchronous teaching.

6) Motions

i. **SGS Calendar Regulations**

The Dean called on Professor Gretchen Kerr to present the first motion.

MOTION #1 THAT Graduate Education Council approve the changes to the SGS Calendar, *section 12.1.2.8 Thesis*, for the 2021-2022 academic year.

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

A significant passage which revises the description of the thesis has been included, as indicated by Professor Kerr earlier. These changes were made based on the recommendations made by the Dissertation Working Group. GEC is the final approval for SGS Calendar Regulations.

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

ii. **SGS Constitution and By-Laws**

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

MOTION #2 THAT Graduate Education Council recommends to Academic Board the approval of revisions to the Constitution of the School of Graduate Studies, and that the Graduate Education Council approves the revisions to the three By-Laws of the Constitution of the School of Graduate Studies.

The School of Graduate Studies last updated its constitution and By-Laws in 2010. In 2019-20, the Dean established a Constitution and By-Laws Ad Hoc Review Committee to review the Constitution and By-laws and recommend to the Graduate Education Council (GEC) any changes that they deemed appropriate. The review committee was chaired by the Vice-Dean, Programs and Innovation, Professor Gretchen Kerr and was composed of volunteer members of GEC.

The Ad Hoc Review Committee met in the Winter 2020 term and consulted with the Chair of the Graduate Academic Appeals Board (By-Law #3), the Chair of the Admissions and Programs Committee, Vice-Dean, Students (By-Law #2). After consultation, the Ad-Hoc Review Committee determine that only minor changes were required.

The School of Graduate Studies is now bringing forward the following updates to the Constitution in order to:

- Streamline the graduate faculty membership descriptions
- Update position titles & change of “collaborative programs” to “collaborative specializations”

The School of Graduate Studies is also bringing forward minor updates to the By-Laws in order to:

- Ensure diverse representation of the Graduate Education Council membership by stipulating that the 5 faculty members, 3 administrative staff members, and 3 student members shall represent different graduate units (By-Law #1);
- Reflect more accurately the scope of the work of the committee governed by By-Law #2 by changing the name “Admissions and Programs Committee” to “Non-Standards Admissions and Programs Committee”;
- Formalize some of the practices, notably regarding voting procedures and the writing of the Decisions, of the Graduate Academic Appeals Board (By-Law #3); and
- Update position titles.

The Ad Hoc Review Committee consulted with the Chairs of the Admissions and Programs Committee (By-Law #2) and the Graduate Academic Appeals Board (By-Law #3), as well as staff and leadership at the School of Graduate Studies. The Graduate Education Council received a draft of these amendments in October 2020; amendment were also shared with the VPAP Office in the same month. On April 7, 2021, SGS brought the draft changes for consultation with the Provost’s Advisory Group (PAG).

Governance: Graduate Education Council will approve the By-Laws on April 20, 2021 and will recommend to Academic Board that the Constitution amendments be approved. The Constitution will be presented to Agenda Committee on May 18, 2021, to Academic Board on May 27, 2021 and will be confirmed by Executive Committee on June 14, 2021.

MOTION (*duly moved and seconded by John Evjen*)

A member asked for clarification on By-Law #2, Section 3.d) membership of the Admissions and Programs committee should include *1 graduate student representative and 1 alternate student representative*. The alternate is a graduate student in the event that the first student is unavailable.

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

iii. **GAAB Membership**

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

MOTION #3 THAT Graduate Education Council approve the appointment of three faculty members and two student members to serve on the Graduate Academic Appeals Board for the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 academic years as follows:

Graduate Faculty Member (Division 3)

Ron Kluger, Chemistry (New - April 20, 2021 to April 19, 2024)

Jane Howe, Mechanical and Industrial Engineering (New-July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2024)

Graduate Faculty Member (Division 2)

David Burnes, Social Work (Renewal -July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2024)

Student Members:

John Evjen, Germanic Languages and Literature, Division I (New - May 1, 2021 to April 30, 2022)

Branden Rizzuto, Anthropology, Division II (New - May 1, 2021 to April 30, 2022)

The Graduate Academic Appeals Board (GAAB) is a standing committee of Graduate Education Council (GEC). Appointment of the Chair of GAAB is approved by GEC upon the nomination of the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies. Appointment of faculty members is approved by GEC upon the recommendation of the Vice-Dean, Students. Appointment of student members is approved by GEC upon the recommendation of the student members of the Council.

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

GEC Approval is final. There being no further discussion, the Dean called the vote. The motion was **CARRIED, 1 abstention**.

7) **Other Business**

For members whose terms are ending June 30, 2021 and who are not eligible for renewal, the Dean thanks them for their service and participation.

8) **Reports for Distribution**

The 2019-20 SGS Admissions & Program Committee Executive Summary and Report was distributed for information. Feedback is welcome to sgs.dean@utoronto.ca.

9) **Closing Remarks**

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