

**Summary Minutes of a Meeting of the
COUNCIL OF THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
Held in the Council Chamber, University Hall
Friday, October 10, 2008, 2:00 pm**

Attendance

M Shirvani in the Chair L McGann
M Allen P Schiavone

Department Representatives

G Forth, Anthropology	P Minev, Mathematical & Statistical Sciences
J Greer, Art & Design	M Lipsett, Mechanical Engineering
B Lemire, Biochemistry	L Guillbert, Med Micro & Immunology
R Vinebrooke, Biological Sciences	P Lacy, Medicine
J Takats, Chemistry	H Bashaw, Music
R Greiner, Computing Science	P Cheung, Pediatrics
T Ono, East Asian Studies	A El-Kadi, Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences
F Peters, Educational Policy Studies	A Joyce, Psychiatry
C Rinaldi, Educational Psychology	N Galambos, Psychology
T Zackodnik, English & Film Studies	A Senthilselvan, Public Health Sciences
M Adria, Extension (MACT)	P Blenis, Renewable Resources
Y d'Entremont, Faculté Saint-Jean	N Krogman, Rural Economy
H Madill, Health Promotion Studies	W Johnston, Sociology
F Swyripa, History & Classics	P Schneider, Speech Pathology & Aud
B Skrypnek, Human Ecology	
G Rockwell, Humanities Computing	
J Martin, Lab Medicine & Pathology	
A Samek, Library & Info Studies	

Graduate Program Administrators

F Hey, Public Health Sciences

Graduate Student Representatives

C Levesque, GSA VP Academic	D MacRitchie, Biological Sciences
D Manolescu, GSA VP Labour Relations	K Cameron, Educational Psychology
C Prado, Ag, Food & Nutri Sciences	M Shahbakhti, Mechanical Engineering
L Sutherland, Ag, Food & Nutri Sciences	S Ahmed, Pharmacy
R Shott, Biochemistry	M Lamey, Physics
J Marleau, Biological Sciences	M Avey, Psychology
B Jensen, Earth & Atmospheric Sci	K Williams, Public Health Sciences

Observer

Chris Hackett, Grad Student Ombudsperson

Guests

M Hui, English Language Program, Extension
M McMahan, English Language Program, Extension

1. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

The agenda was approved.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

a. Approval of the September 19, 2008 summary minutes

The Chair revised "President's Committee" to read "President's Advisory Committee" under item 4d Other Business. The minutes were approved.

b. Matters arising

Three Graduate Program Administrators are added to the Council Representatives. Council welcomes Felicity Hey, Sharon Campbell, and Gail Matthew.

3. INFORMAL BUSINESS

a. Discussion Topic: Distribution of the Queen Elizabeth II Graduate Scholarships

L McGann reported that the ratio of QEII awards increased from 1:20 to 1:10 full-time graduate students, increasing the UofA's numbers to 268 Master's and 226 Doctoral awards. The FGSR feels it might be most effective if departments assigned the scholarships, and utilized the awards in their own recruitment and planning. The FGSR would like Council feedback on how to equitably distribute the awards among departments, ensure recipient eligibility and quality, and determine reporting.

Council discussion provided the following comments:

- Most effective if departments determine award distribution but FGSR continues to safeguard quality. FGSR noted the current scholarship requirement of a minimum GPA of 3.5. Several council representatives requested flexibility if the awards are at a department level.
- Departments requested that award distribution numbers be known early enough to aid in recruitment.
- To determine number of scholarships per department, evaluate both the number of students per department, and the level of quality maintained by those students. Perhaps the award allotment can be determined by number of students in department with >3.5 standing.
- GPA might not be best singular determining factor as some students have outstanding research and potential, but lower GPAs.
- The QEII awards mirror the NSERC and SSHRC national awards in criteria, and the FGSR cannot open the awards to excluded students (dependent on year of study or international status).

b. Question Period

K Cameron requested clarification on relative versus absolute grades in graduate-level courses, and on policy concerning professors using a curve for the graduate grading system. There is no university policy on the grading in graduate courses. There are policies within some departments, based on class size, but they are sometimes inconsistent. C Hackett agreed that in the experience of the Ombudservice this is a problem, particularly with classes smaller than 15.

A Councillor inquired into application for admission recommendation letters, and if there is a way to simplify the process, as waiting for original documents with original signatures prolongs admission competitions. L Blair explained the FGSR does not require letters of recommendation for admissions (Section 5, Graduate Program Manual), but does for scholarship applications. Recommendation letters for internal scholarships may be supplied by pdf, but the tri-agency scholarships require original signatures.

c. Announcements and Reports by the Chair and Councillors

1. E-thesis proposal

P Schiavone stated the FGSR is making plans to move forward on the e-thesis project, and invited councillors to share any further discussion or concerns. Questions arose concerning the requirement for students to sign the licensing agreement and if there could be a standard delay for those students who have not yet published.

2. ESL 550 (English as a Second Language)

Representatives from the English as a Second Language (ESL) program provided Council with information on the current ESL format, and the proposed modifications. Registration in ESL 550 is currently done through Open Studies (Office of the Registrar). The proposal is that students will now apply to ESL 550 directly through the ESL Office. If students are admitted into ESL 550, there are no international student visa issues, as they receive full admission to the language course, rather than conditional admission to a graduate program. The ESL office is hoping to generate program growth by simplifying admission to the program, and creating continuity amongst programs for English language requirements. The ESL program teaches skills for the entire education system, whereas TOEFL tests give just a snapshot of a student's language proficiency.

3. Vanier Scholarships Update

The President's Vanier Adjudication Committee is meeting October 22 and November 3 to determine the UofA's nominees (9 NSERC, 5 SSHRC, 3 CIHR). The 17 Vanier Scholarship nominations are being sent to Ottawa and the federal adjudication by November 14, 2008. Results will be known March-June of 2009.

4. Show-and-Tell

The Chair shared the total annual operating-funded graduate scholarship budget. The spreadsheet will be forwarded to Council. Ideas for future show-and-tells included 'How did you hear about the UofA' survey results, and the ratio of graduate applications to admissions.

d. Other Business

None.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:46 pm.