

Council of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
 Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020
 2:00 to 4:00 pm
 Virtual Meeting

Attendance at FGSR Council – February 19, 2020

Department/Unit Faculty Representatives

Art & Design	Joan Greer
Biochemistry	David Stuart
Business (non-departmentalized) - MBA	Michael Maier
Business (non-departmentalized) - PhD	Trish Reay
Chemistry	Michael Serpe
Civil & Environmental Engineering	Selma Guigard
Communication Sciences & Disorders	Andrea MacLeod
Computing Science	Greg Kondrak
Drama	Stefano Muneroni
Economics	Heather Eckert
Educational Policy Studies	Evelyn Steinhauer
Educational Studies	Douglas Gleddie
Electrical & Computer Engineering	Yindi Jing
Electrical & Computer Engineering	Mahdi Tavakoli Afshari
Elementary Education	Trudy Cardinal
Faculte Saint-Jean (non-departmentalized)	Samira El Atia
History & Classics	Heather Coleman
Human Ecology	Rachel McQueen
Kinesiology, Sport, and Recreation (non-dept)	Normand Boule
Laboratory Medicine & Pathology	Monika Keelan
Law (non-departmentalized)	Linda Reif
Library & Information Studies	Dinesh Rathi
Linguistics	David J Beck
Mathematical & Statistical Science	Jochen Kuttler
Mechanical Engineering	Christopher Dennison
Medical Microbiology & Immunology	Edan Foley
Medicine	Nadia Jahroudi
Modern Languages & Cultural Studies	Irene Sywenky
Music	Maryam Moshaver
Nursing	Dianne Tapp
Obstetrics & Gynecology (Medical Sciences)	Denise Hemmings
Occupational Therapy	Shaniff Esmail
Oncology	Alan Underhill
Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences (non-dept)	Arno Siraki
Philosophy	Ingo Brigandt
Physics	Craig Heinke
Physiology	Greg Funk
Psychiatry	Allen Chan
Psychiatry	Andrew Greenshaw
Psychology	Chris Westbury
Resource Economics & Environmental Sociology	Henry An
School of Public Health (non-departmentalized)	Ruth Wolfe
Secondary Education	Bonnie Watt
Women's and Gender Studies	Felice Lifshitz

Associate Deans (Graduate) Representatives for Departmentalized Faculties

Agricultural, Life and Environmental Sciences (ALES)	Leluo Guan
Arts	Kim Noels
Education	Doug Gleddie
Engineering	Jason Carey
Medicine & Dentistry	Greg Funk
Rehabilitation Medicine	Esther Kim
Science	Mark McDermott

Ex-Officio Representatives

FGSR Dean & Vice-Provost (FGSR Council Chair)	Brooke Milne
FGSR Vice-Dean	Bryan Hogeveen
FGSR Associate Dean	Victoria Ruétalo
FGSR Associate Dean	Tracy Raivio
FGSR Associate Dean	Ali Shiri
Vice-Provost and Chief Librarian (or Delegate)	Carlo Dimaggio
Vice-Provost and Chief Librarian (or Delegate)	Dale Askey

Graduate Program Administrators Committee (GPAC) Representatives

Department of Dentistry	Dalyce Barss
-------------------------	--------------

Graduate Student Association (GSA) Directly Elected Officials Representatives

VP Academic	Sachiketha Reddy
-------------	------------------

Graduate Student Association (GSA) Council Representatives

Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences	Amanda Greenwell
Biomedical Engineering	Armin Norouzi Yengeje
Pediatrics	Claudia Holody
Biomedical Engineering, PhD	Kevin Solar
Agricultural, Food & Nutritional Science	Klevis Haxhijaj (Alternate)
Political Science - PhD	Meagan Auer
Surgery	Mukt Patel
Pharmacology, PhD	Nayiar Shahid
Mechanical Engineering	Sai Swaroop Reddy Pogalla
Civil & Environmental Engineering - PhD	Salam Khalife
Nursing	Sania Amiri-Ishani
English & Film Studies	Shashi Kumar
Pediatrics	Shubham Soni
Psychology	Tiffany Kung
Pharmacy	Yasser Tabana

Observers – Non-Voting

FGSR Operations Coordinator (Secretary)*	Medha Samarasinghe
FGSR Executive Coordinator*	Andrea Riewe
FGSR, EA to the Associate Deans*	Dena Giroux
FGSR Professional Development & Community Volunteer Program Director*	Deanna Davis
FGSR, Admissions and Program Services Supervisor*	Joyce Anderson
Guest - Grad Admin, Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences	Chesceri Mason Gafuik
Guest - Grad Admin	Gail Mathew
Guest - Grad Admin, Bio Sci	Shelley Scott

*Non-Voting

Regrets:**Department/Unit Faculty Representatives**

Frances Plane - Pharmacology

Ross Tsuyuki - Pharmacology

Uldis Silins – Renewable Resources

Sean Robertson – Native Studies

FGSR Council October 14, 2020**1.0 Call to Order at 2:03 PM**

Dean Brooke Milne called the meeting to order.

- She welcomed members of Council, and reminded everyone of the process of using Zoom. For further support on this platform please do reach out to Andrea Riewe and she can help you.
- Those interacting by telephone can participate by pressing *6.
- Please use the chat feature to move and second the motions.
- Those with voting abilities will have received an email with links. Please have this open and ready to go.

2.0 Approval of Agenda for October 20, 2020

Dean Milne proposed a friendly amendment for the agenda. Although FGSR had planned to provide an update on our Value Alignment Plan, we will find an opportunity for this group to consider it at a future Council meeting, when we will have more time for discussion.

No objections were raised.

Moved / Seconded: Bryan Hogeveen / Dinesh Rathi

Approved by general consent.

3.0 Approval of Minutes of September 16, 2020

Moved / Seconded: Shaniff Esmail / Douglas Gleddie

Amendment Required: Amanda Greenwald from Pharmacy was present at the meeting but she was not included in the attendance for the meeting.

Approved by electronic vote.

4.0 Matters Arising from the Minutes

No matters arising from the minutes.

5.0 Report from the Dean**COVID-19 Updates**

Dean Milne reminded Council members that the Government of Canada (GoC) has confirmed that starting **October 20, 2020**, Post Secondary Institutions with a COVID-19 readiness plan approved by their province or

territory will be able to reopen to international students who are currently outside Canada. The U of A has received confirmation from Advanced Education that our plan was approved by Alberta Health and was submitted to the GoC. We are still monitoring the GoC website to see when UofA is listed as an officially approved institution.

Students can now be directed to the applicable travel updates on UAI's [Immigration, Travel, and Employment Information webpage](#).

As part of the U of A's approved COVID-19 readiness plan, students must fulfill the mandatory quarantine requirements by booking [UAlberta's Isolation Accommodation Program](#) OR having a quarantine plan approved by the institution and registered with the [Travel Registry](#) before travelling to Canada.

Mentorship Academy

The FGSR Mentorship Academy Workshop "Mentoring for Career Conversations: Supporting Graduate Students in Times of Uncertainty" is coming up on Monday, Oct. 26 from 12:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. The presenters are Tyree McCrackin & Deanna Davis.

Using the Individual Development Plan (IDP) of the Professional Development Requirement as a starting point, this workshop will equip supervisors with an understanding of why you are ideally positioned to have career conversations with your students and will provide fundamentals for supporting an effective conversation. Tools and tips will be shared to help you start, engage, and navigate career conversations with your students, even if the student's career ambitions lie outside of your own career journey.

Graduate Program Support Team:

Dean Milne reminded Council that Vice-Provost Tammy Hopper has led the formation of a new GFC Programs Committee that replaces ASC and ASC-SOS. Its terms of reference also provide for the oversight on minor and major course changes previously covered by GFC Policy 37.

Part of this new committee structure includes two parallel program support teams: one focused on undergraduate education and one focused on graduate education. The Graduate Program Support Team (GPST) has its terms of reference and a committee structure that has been reviewed by the Provost's office.

FGSR will send the terms of reference (ToR) for the GPST out to FGSR Council, GPAC, the GSA, and GEFAC to seek nominations for members belonging to each of those groups. Members are welcome to send nominations for others or for themselves to the graddean@ualberta.ca account.

There are two representatives from each of those groups, so in the event we receive more nominations than there are positions, we will ask FGSR Council to vote on the list of nominees. There will be more information in the forthcoming email and the ToR to explain the purpose of the GPST, its scope and authorities, and its role as a support resource for academic units considering new program proposals, changes to those that are already approved, new courses, and so forth.

Restructuring / Budget (Acknowledge)

Dean Milne noted that there has been some confusion and concern about where FGSR fits within the UAT initiatives. She can confirm that its role within the university is being considered, as is the question of how it

can be transformed to meet the needs of our new institutional landscape. FGSR will continue as the central academic faculty that oversees the administration of graduate programs at the U of A. Graduate students will continue to be registered with FGSR as their home faculty, and we will continue to work with units to administer more than 530 approved programs across campus. The Provost recognizes and values the role of FGSR, and with plans to grow graduate education as part of UAT, the faculty is in an optimal position to transform to support this growth going forward. Dean Milne noted that there would be time at the end of the agenda to discuss this issue further.

6.0 Proposal: Communication Sciences & Disorders ELP Changes

Dean Milne introduced Andrea MacLeod, the Grad Chair for the Communication Sciences & Disorders department. The program has a research program and a professional training master's that leads towards a speech pathology registration. Dr. MacLeod noted that the ELP requirement for the program needs to be revised to include IELTS scores and to bring the scores down to better align with other Canadian programs and provincial colleges in which students register once they complete the program if they plan to practice in Alberta.

The suggested revisions are better aligned with other programs in other provinces and other university programs. The changes involve moving the required overall score from 115 to 102 for TOFEL, and requiring a minimum score of 7.5 across the different components of IELTS.

Motion: Be it resolved that FGSR Council approve the calendar changes as presented for the MSc in Speech-Language Pathology English Language Proficiency Requirements for immediate implementation and inclusion in the 21-22 Calendar.

Moved/Seconded: Shaniff Esmail/ Henry An

Questions/Discussion: None

Approved

7.0 VAP Update

Deferred to another meeting (see note in Item 2.0)

8.0 FGSR 2019-2020 Associate Dean Report

Dean Milne introduced Associate Dean Ali Shiri to present the Associate Deans Report on behalf of FGSR's Associate Deans (Janice Causgrove Dunn, Tracy Raivio, Victoria Ruetalo, and himself) for the period of July 1, 2019 to August 1, 2020.

Some key activities the ADs are focusing on include:

Student cases; serving as pro-deans for exams; representing FGSR on chair/dean selection and review committees; hosting Graduate chair orientation workshops; Graduate Student onboarding.

The ADs also focus on awards adjudications, supervision and mentorship initiatives, governance and mental health.

Covid-19 specific initiatives:

Serving on Academic Impact and Research Impact teams; serving as on-call prodeans since March; offering advocacy for graduate funding; providing guidelines for remote supervision; offering resources for mental health for graduate students; participating in creating videos for students and supervisors to support the onboarding of students during remote learning; supporting community-based research during limited or restricted access.

The ADs worked on 200 cases during the reporting period; attended 56 exams as pro-deans, and 47 consultations for chairs or associate deans for grad; worked on 43 scholarship/award adjudications, and participated in 20 committees. While there are several different reasons for student cases, the top three were Academic Issues, Pro-Dean and Consultations. The cases are complex and often involve multiple issues.

Questions/Discussion:

- A Council member asked if the numbers for the distribution of student cases by citizenship was reflective of the overall split in the grad student population.
 - We have over 8200 students and roughly 40% are international. Of our total cases, just over 50% involve international students.

9.0 Discussion: Language on Rescinding Offers

The complications of COVID-19 have resulted in a higher than normal deferral rate for students starting in Fall 2020. One of the resulting complications is that deferring admission means a deferral of funding. Most departments do not have language in their offer letters to deal with the risk management of students that are unable to come or need to defer to an upcoming term. The proposed terms are meant to provide departments and supervisors some flexibility when there are timelines and requirements around funding offers. The accepted offer is a legal contract between the department and the student, and poses a considerable institutional risk if the offer were to be rescinded. If a contract were broken, the student would have the right of recourse to sue.

The provision for deferral is at the discretion of each academic unit, which may allow students to defer for up to a year or beyond with approval. After seeking advice from General Counsel and Faculty & Staff Relations, we have provided some language to consider including in the offer letters going out from departments.

FGSR is recommending that units either use the language as is or modify it to fit their own letters of funding. This will help mitigate any potential risk associated with the uncertainty of travel during COVID-19.

The draft language is included in the package, and we will send the confirmed language out shortly. We recommend using this language or a modified version that is better suited to the departmental context/practice. This will reduce risk, particularly in instances where units are using “soft” funding to make multi-year funding offers to new students.

Questions/Comments:

- A Council member noted that a sentence beginning with “if you are unable” needs a bit of work.
 - Departments are welcome to change the language to best suit their needs.
- A Council member from a small faculty noted that they do currently have language to say that the funding will lapse if students don’t register. One year is too long for the faculty and they need to have much shorter periods.

- Dean Milne agreed that a shorter period makes sense based on individual departmental needs. Given that the current reality may be with us for quite some time, we may consider bringing this discussion back to FGSR Council to consider refining the language further and including it in the Calendar.
- A council member suggested adding the words “further deferral” in between “timeframe” and “requires”. Dean Milne agreed that this made sense, noting that modifications are welcome as long as the key points are maintained.

10.0 **Discussion: Core Competencies**

Associate Dean Janice Causgrove Dunn has led this project; an explanatory memo has been included in the package. Dean Milne briefly outlined the key points. This is Council’s first discussion of the idea, which involves seeing how core competencies might tie together with learning outcomes.

The discussion came out of a conversation with the Dean of Students’ office in light of increasing demands for student accommodations. Defining core competencies in graduate programs follows the examples set by several other Canadian universities (e.g. Manitoba, UWO) in the spirit of accessibility in graduate education.

Dean Milne quoted from the 2014 report published by CAGS that has motivated consideration of how Bona Fide Academic Requirements can be defined and considered:

The issues identified by graduate administrators and student services staff as critical in working with this group of students include the interfaces between a student’s accommodations, the nature of the essential requirements of their academic discipline, and the legislative and policy framework within which the institution operates.

U of M was a pioneer in a similar initiative. The following is a quote from a news release they issued when the BFAR project was launched:

There is a sense of excitement surrounding the BFAR initiative, which represents a major commitment by the university to accessible, inclusive education. The University of Manitoba is one of the first universities in Canada to implement a BFAR process, and has been commended by the Province of Manitoba’s Disabilities Issues Office for its strong action plan in support of barrier-free education.

BFARs are the minimum and essential knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, and experiences that a student must acquire in order to successfully graduate from a program.

U of A already has a Duty to Accommodate Procedure in place. These proposed core competencies are intended to work in concert with that policy so as to provide clarity on what elements of our graduate requirements are Bona Fide -- that is, which elements cannot be waived or exempted. The goal is to define the absolute minimum requirements that must be completed to earn the credential. This enables the university to apply flexible approaches to accommodate a student’s situation while being cognizant of how these approaches can articulate with the core competencies to ensure student success in their respective graduate programs.

The core competencies presented in the package are part of a first draft for discussion and further input.

Discussion / Questions:

- A Council member noted that the term “core competencies” and the term “academic requirements” are inconsistent.
- Another Council member questioned the second item about completing a capping project. Is there a regulation that requires that a course-based masters must have a capping exercise? Is this point prescriptive?
 - Dean Milne clarified that this item is meant to refer to a culminating project. She noted that we can fine tune the language as we proceed.
- A Council member noted that the word “successfully” should be included in the point about candidacy.

11.0 Discussion: Residence Requirement

In the Calendar, there are policies that set out the U of A’s residence requirement for graduate programs. Master’s requirements are established and monitored by the department; most course-based programs have none, and there are none for grad certificates/diplomas. For Doctoral programs, the residence requirement is meant to achieve the following:

To provide students with contact with the U of A, their instructors, supervisors, peers during their program; and to foster students to become independent researchers and scholars in their academic discipline through coursework, attendance and participation in seminars, teaching assignments, and interacting with faculty and their peers.

The default residence requirement is two years, but most programs have their own specific timeframes. Due to COVID-19, FGSR is seeing requests to exempt this requirement for students early in their programs and with those who have just started. Simply due to the situation and through no fault of their own, students can’t meet it because they cannot be physically present in Edmonton.

Dean Milne is bringing this forward to Council to discuss whether it is relevant in the ever evolving graduate education landscape. Many of our peer institutions do not have a residence requirement. With a push to consider more online delivery of graduate programs including hybrid formats, Dean Milne wanted Council to consider if the residency requirement is something that can be eliminated to allow students greater flexibility in the completion of their requirements.

We have seen in the last year the many varied and creative ways that students are able to stay engaged with the university, their peers, and their programs. Dean Milne proposes considering eliminating this as an FGSR institutional requirement, although individual programs can maintain those requirements that are already established and necessary.

Discussion / Questions:

- A Council member noted that the School of Business requires the students to be in residence for four years for funding and also for mandatory teaching. The School is not sure what will happen post-COVID-19. Business offers numerous seminars, workshops, and occasional offerings that are very important to the PhD program and that students should be available to take.

Dean Milne asked how other departments and programs currently handle the residence requirements. This context, she noted, will help FGSR provide a better description in terms of the minimum.

- A Council member from Law noted that their programs have short residences for completing course work. They have various options for PhDs who are teaching. Most students have full time jobs that they are balancing with their programs. It's important to remember that there are benefits to coming to classes, meeting with supervisors etc, but students have a lot of things going on in their lives and they interact with their programs in different ways so she is in favour of eliminating the requirement.
- A Council member said that they are not opposed to getting rid of the requirement as an FGSR policy, but thinks that a requirement of one year for master's students and two years for PhD students is a great idea on the local level. Her only hesitation with the move is that she doesn't want it to signal a move towards more online teaching. She is seeing how the first-year students are struggling to learn in the same way as students who came in pre-OVID. Being together is a critical part of their learning so some residency requirements would be useful.

Dean Milne acknowledged that there is a variety of practices across campus.

- A Council member echoed the point that students learning from each other is important. But she said that she has seen instances where it was enforced but it really didn't make sense (e.g. when the supervisor was in the home country).
- A member from Engineering noted that in the case of experimental work, supervisors require students to be on campus. If changed, we would need to change letters to reflect what is required in the offers.
- A member from Education supported removing the FGSR requirement, but allowing a requirement on the local level that accounts for different contexts and different types of students. Some programs in Education lose students to other institutions when they are superintendents, etc. due to the residency requirements. He questioned how the requirement would be enforced, aside from through fees. He echoed others who supported leaving decisions about residency requirements at the program level.
- A student member noted that she doesn't see a consistent pedagogical need across departments so supports the removal of the requirement. It can provide a barrier for those with family commitments. Also anecdotally, students are finding creative ways to get around being in town. It might be useful to note differently that being on campus has benefits related to experience, networking, attending seminars and presentations which may be important for the overall experience as well as for entering into the job market.
- A student member mentioned that based on her experience as an international PhD student, she believes that flexibility is good but feels that in-person learning is better. Many international students want to come to the country, engage, and learn and live and experience the community. She feels a minimum requirement is not bad since many students do want the whole experience of being on campus.

Dean Milne thanked Council members for this discussion. The FGSR will work on the language so that it is clearer and provides more flexibility.

12.0 GSA Monthly Report

Dean Milne introduced Sachiketha Reddy, VP Academic, to present the monthly report.

The GSA is working on their strategic plan. They are hosting social events for grad students. He thanked Vice-Dean Hogeveen and Associate Dean Ruetalo for attending their session. They look forward to doing more. They are working with other stakeholders on campus on internships and entrepreneurship. They are also in close consultation with the administration regarding the ARWG and SET initiatives. They are hosting town halls to facilitate consultation with graduate students.

13.0 Question Period

- A Council member asked if there are plans for the President and Provost to attend FGSR Council. Dean Milne confirmed that the President and Provost will be attending a meeting with FGSR Council, GPAC, and FGSR Staff, comprising a cross section of those who work first hand with the programs and graduate students. We will be calling a special meeting if we can't hold the meeting during a regularly scheduled Council meeting.
- A Council member asked what the process was for getting an institution included in the ELP exemption list. FGSR will find out this information and circulate it.
- Dean Milne confirmed that GFC has approved the use of Duolingo given the current situation and lack of access to other ELP testing methods. Duolingo is an institutional policy for the time being so individual programs can use the results to determine admissibility. Some departments might be considering having an admissions condition related to ELPs.
- A Council member is pleased with the GFC programs committee, but wanted to know if there is a mandate to streamline the process for approvals. There may be a large volume of changes coming forward.
 - Dean Milne noted that the two wings, undergrad and grad, are meant to provide support so that the process is thorough and expedient. This will ensure that the path is as clear as possible through the governance pathway. It will allow a group that is well versed in graduate programs to be consulted as programs are being proposed.
- A Council member requested that the bulk of the time at the FGSR roundtable be reserved for asking questions and providing feedback. Dean Milne noted that she will make that request.

Meeting adjourned at 3:51 PM