



**GRADUATE STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL  
MINUTES**

**Wednesday November 28, 2018  
2:00 pm – 4:00 pm / EME 4218**

**Meeting commenced at 2:04 pm**

**1. Dean's Remarks**

The Dean welcomed all attendees and advised that this could be the last meeting of GSAC this year.

He then introduced the new HES representatives- Sarah Lawrason and Helena Neudorf.

We have put together new policies for how CoGS is operated. The Policy O-4 amendment was accepted at Senate recently. There is a change to student representation at Graduate Council. At the October 24, 2018 GSAC meeting, Chantal Vien volunteered to be the GSAC representative to the Graduate Council.

Tentatively effective January 2, 2019, there are now more vacancies for graduate students on the Graduate Council, can now have three: a PhD student – one research-based master's student – one course-based master's student. They must all be from separate faculties. How do we get there? Refer to Item 2.

**2. Graduate student representatives on Graduate Council as per new O-4 policy (discussion of process and timing to select and appoint members) (15 min) D. Tannant**

There needs to be continuity of information from Grad Council to GSAC. Student Senators get information various ways as well so senator not needed on our council.

A member asked what Grad Council does. The Dean explained that it is a body that guides CoGS regarding policies and procedures as to how we operate. Student voices add value to that. The level of understanding is a bit deeper there when students participate and then share the information. He advised that information garnered at GSAC may be taken back to Grad Council and talked about with respect to the concerns voiced here. Grad Council is a key committee as it involves Deans of each faculty (or their representative) as well as one doctoral student elected by and from the doctoral students and two master's students.

A member stated that we should have a representative from newly formed Graduate Students Association (GSA) on the Graduate Council – The Dean would like to know how they would arrive at determining the representative, if there was to be one. The GSA would like to host a town-hall meeting next semester so students can have a platform to voice their concerns and comments etc. The long term goal of the GSA is to have a voice on campus with concerns of graduate students, and think it would be useful to have a member sitting on Grad Council as an observer, and maybe later a possibility of getting elected in.

The Dean thinks students that are on the GSAC get 'thin' with input on several other committees. He wants to create cohort of key people, those involved in GSAC who are regularly involved in attending other council's meetings. The policy at senate (Policy 0-4), is



silent as to how we do that. There is no direction as to how they should be elected, how long the term of election should be, how often. He wants to talk to grad students all at once, to see what they think. He said the opportunity will be there, tentatively effective January 2, 2019, to have three grad students at Graduate Council meetings and hopefully disseminating to all grad students. Is it going to be determined by volunteering or elections? Once the grad student association is fully functioning they can do as they think best.

A member asked if it can be offered to other grad students as well as those on GSAC. May be an idea to have one of the three positions that could flex (maybe one meeting or two?)

The Dean asked if we could reach out to all grad students; would GSAC be the ones who look at and decide which three would be the representatives on Grad Council – would have info presented of who they are and why they are interested in the position. There should be more than one meeting attendance required; have a backup if someone can't make it.

A member queried at least having criteria; The Dean said Policy O-4 allows for three student members: one PhD student – one thesis-based master's student – one course-based master's student. He may need to draw from a different candidate base so that different faculties are represented.

Each position could have a chain of position – ie: one on GSAC, one on Grad Council etc.

The Dean said the three people would be covering different things with responsibility to report back to their faculties.

Member stated that all information should be entered into one place or it becomes diffused and unorganized.

The Director introduced the new GSAC website; it has the Terms of Reference for GSAC, members, minutes of meetings, etc. She asked for other ideas for centralized information to be added to the site. Contact is Pieter Uni, Manager of Communications and Public Engagement. Looking for ways to catalogue Graduate Council on the website, but are not there yet.

The Dean advised that if the GSA gets created, we could add a link to a new site they create.

Member said once GSA created there will be a way to share, the issue is *FIPPA*.

The Dean stated that there are forms on website, they will be improved for ease of path through programs

### 3. **2019 UBC Okanagan Learning Conference, May 6-7, 2019** (5 min) D. Tannant

**Theme for conference – experiential learning (excerpt from email below)**

Assembling a committee – looking for volunteers

“the 2019 UBC Okanagan Learning Conference, May 6-7, 2019... The conference will explore experiential learning, hope to reach out to colleagues and students to let them know there are some exciting opportunities to get involved with the Learning Conference, and ask them to contact me. And send me some names and I'll reach out.”

### 4. **Engineering Graduate Student Access to UBCV courses**

Ben Wiltshire from engineering PhD-electrical – sits on Engineering Graduate Student Society (EGSS).

What he hears, as he is sitting at EGSS meetings, is members are saying the courses offered at UBCO are somewhat limited – especially at graduate level and people have come to EGSS as a group stating they are required to take courses they are not necessarily interested in; basically,



they want to expand the number of courses offered; would be good to have a variety of courses for graduate students here as it would improve their education. The end goal would be increased courses for graduate students so they are the best graduate students from any university. Being linked with UBCV would present an opportunity there to offer courses between campuses, maybe online, most students know that they can register in UBCV courses. Not clear if they need to go to Vancouver - can they be organized to have courses here? He was not sure whose bell to ring so brought the issue to GSAC.

The Dean asked if anyone in the room is taking courses offered in Vancouver which can be taken here.

Member from the school of education stated that they can petition the dean, he will approve courses if a good case presented – ie: research methods.

Another member said that in the Southern Medical Program, grad courses are shared by Vancouver, Victoria and Kelowna; they can get access to them on Canvas.

HES member said they might have professor that has issue with distance – may have to book a room for video, etc; another one in an older building no AV – professor skyped her in for a lecture – it worked well for her, could be cool having a few students do it together – professor may be happy with a few people together to get more teaching done – not a formal solution.

The Dean asked if she was only one in the skype session. She said yes, though there could have been more present - there are models, but it only works if professor is willing. Need to converse with professors in Vancouver. Engineering probably has very few available.

An engineering student had experience with a student in Vancouver being skyped in to his course. Structure could be good as there are different ways to do the models of how it should look.

The Dean advised that CoGS is not really in a position to do anything except to chat with professors as to how to facilitate the process. Could figure out which rooms have AV available – take that information back to the grads and see if they are willing to do it.

Another member advised that the concerns are from many students; took course which is irrelevant – couldn't go to Vancouver for one course – he is mostly researched-based – the Vancouver professor thought that CoGS could add formal structure – students want CoGS to help set up formal structure for signing up for courses in Vancouver – maybe click on an icon on the page that says it is available in Vancouver – one proposal – they want it to be a formal ask, not informal like the previous example.

Formal structure comes in when faculty creating the course, can there be an option for offering to both campuses? That may be the concern for professors who aren't interested in distance teaching. Can the school enforce it if decided to move forward with this?

Senate Curriculum Committee needs to discuss; takes extra effort for instructor – if we could go beyond that – maybe exchange and continue process – ask professors if new courses being created are a possibility for this. The Dean has seen the issue of students reaching out. They are gung-ho to move forward with it but it all falls apart because of AV or ability to make link. He can raise it with the working group of deans to see if desire is there to see more offerings of courses on both campuses – deans do ask occasionally by email if willing to give courses to Vancouver and have Vancouver offer courses here. The questions get asked and there is little uptake on them.



Are the courses offered in Vancouver listed in SSIC? Yes, a form needs to be filled out.

Is there incentive for professors to offer more?

The Dean said the incentive is so low it is barely negligible, there is no extra credit for teaching loads, it is a structural barrier. A member said barriers to be broken; another said you have to push to break. The Dean asked about taking online courses not offered here. Members said for adding to CV - personal reasons – costs for certificate – are there extra costs if being used for credit? Are there formal agreements? Yes – Western Deans Agreement, which has been in place for a long time. Not sure where tuition is paid. They are not allowed to say no.

International office and Go Global also. Lots of relationships around the world which would potentially not have to pay there as you pay here. Mitacs is one way to go abroad and they pay your expenses. The Dean asked if they are using them toward degree. You can do it with advance permission to do so. The problem is there is no immediate low hanging fruit.

Member says he is taking online courses he is paying for to help his research and another is taking a third year course for his masters to help out. Some said they have already taken similar courses during their undergrad and having to explore courses in Vancouver, like virtual design for civil. Would like to see it offered at Okanagan campus.

The Dean spoke to R. Klukas regarding engineering courses and the various requirements for each course. Programs decide what their program requirements are but UBC is really quite keen on experiential learning – co-op work team placement – research between undergrad and master's could count as experiential learning credits. So courses required get dropped and that is beneficial. R. Klukas is very interested in exploring this.

A member talked about the grad exchange agreement – U of Toronto, McGill, etc. and assumes they are all offered online, maybe teleconferencing; the courses get paid for at UBCO.

The Dean said they are designed to go to the university for a term. They try to make it tuition neutral.

A member said it is important for online to be available for research-based learning due to access to labs etc.

The Dean suggested that they go back to GSA and ask if way to soften edges, by substituting experiential learning, other institutes, some room to explore those options.

A member queried with regard to 'softening' program requirements - is there a mechanism in place to assist? Yes, two – there might be a way to access.

A member took the course and used it as directed study. The Dean says structure is there, you have to find, coordinate, put together, and it is hard work to do.

The Dean stated that there are no major answers – He will go to senate curriculum committee to discuss and see if things can happen. If our students participate in other, can other participate in ours?

A query as to whether student representatives are on curriculum committee (maybe one says the Dean).

## 5. Focus topic for December GSAC December 19 (will there be a meeting?)

Members agreed no meeting. Next meeting will be January 23, 2019, meeting place TBD.



Add Graduate Student Association meeting to next GSAC meeting agenda. (Done)

No others have been invited to GSA, yet. Researching options to discern formal process and communicate. Now have formal direction they can present as it is ratified. Not intended to be exclusive but inclusionary.

## 6. Other Business

From last meeting, there was to be information sent out regarding Recreation info for usage of facilities. M. Brown sent out email from Tom Huisman, Director of Athletics and Recreation (May 2018 GSAC) to current GSAC members. A. Ahsan will send email to CoGS regarding their concerns about the user fees so that Dean Tannant can take it to higher leadership.

L. Mudde and K. Marr volunteered to attend Grad Council in January as there will not be opportunity to elect members to attend prior to that meeting.

By February there will be three permanent people appointed to sit on Grad Council.

A member asked why, if we can send meeting information regarding requiring Grad Council appointees out, why can't an invitation to attend be sent out for a town hall meeting? There are rules around what can be sent to students via the SISC so we aren't able to.

The Dean said when we send out invite we could possibly add in about the town-hall as an opportunity to voice grad student's concerns.

A member said they want to be more transparent. The Director suggested contacting P. Uni so he can reach out in appropriate ways. She doesn't know about the rules regarding sending out for student purposes. We could give information in two sentences or less and we can possibly make it easier to append to our site by adding a link. K. Marr can forward information, if they are reaching out through grad reps.

A member advised about a planned social at The Well for grad students on December 7. Faculties are working on getting to know each other.

The Director talked about the Commons. It will have dedicated spaces for grad students – a workshop room/thesis practice room as well as a new graduate study space – lockers - two bookable study rooms - collegium space. Working on access for grad spaces so that all registered grad students can access new space and the existing Graduate Collegium. CoGS is working with the Library on access and will communicate once they are open and how to access. The Dean wants the rooms occupied. Fill it so we can keep asking for more grad space. The Director says she heard that it will be a rolling opening - classroom space available first, then the remainder. The students may know more than we do!

The Dean asked about collegium and who is using that facility– says it seems spacious. Social Work does not have space so they use it a lot, not enough room for others so they don't utilize it, the space can be booked.

The Dean asked if there anything we need to do to change culture. He said that in Switzerland, every time a PhD student defended their thesis they would invite a broad spectrum of people to see it, and have wine, they celebrated the defence.



Should we be celebrating defences? He had a talk with another faculty member that it might be an idea to build residences for grad students who have families – sell the idea of the building on the residences but reserve the main floor for pub/wine bar, for graduate students only.

Maybe a graduate student mental health facility is required, have ‘stress relief liquids’ available. Social side is challenging for grad students except collegium. Fridges have lunches. There is a deficit in cutlery. One spoon!!!

The Dean asked if there are things we can do to make life better for the grad students socially. A member talked about a ballroom celebration, like in Germany – or hallway says the Dean. Most defences go well, most defences occur at the same time, can all celebrate together. While in Switzerland, he would be walking from train to campus – screens announcing today’s defences or guest lecturers – front and centre publicity about it– We mostly miss out on information here because it is on website. Not showing what is happening TODAY!! Community/campus need to see what is happening so all can celebrate. In Germany, masters and PhD celebrated. Canadian way is very low-key way to do things – The Dean thinks we can raise the bar – work with P. Uni and others and pull off convocation type stuff and insert relevant current info. A member said there is not really a celebration for engineering faculty, if someone was defending, the faculty would send out a mass email – at least could watch your friend, colleague.

The Director says a CoGS staff member adds when defences are happening, through channels available to us. There could be a major backlash if we sent mass emails. May be a good idea to keep in the faculty only. Comes out through psychology program coordinator to tell their students. The Dean says others could be doing things differently, so we should discover what differences are between various programs. Director says each faculty has communicator so chat to them about getting out to your faculty. A member said that their program assistant sends out monthly email regarding talks, defences, etc all listed. Also an assistant would send out an email congratulating when people had defended their thesis, sometimes info re: where they are celebrating after (ie BNA at 7). The Dean would like to take these ideas to the Dean’s Council. Defending a thesis is worthy of being celebrated.

EGSS and BGSS coming together to do events. It is a start. GSA could have events – EGSS wanted more events to celebrate – spread out with other faculties’ grad students.

The Dean is loving hearing all the ideas and initiatives being brought out. A few more days of TA’ing, courses finishing. Don’t be stressed! Get a hug!

**Holiday wishes!**

**Meeting adjourned at 3:20 pm**