



GRADUATE STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL
MINUTES

Wednesday, November 24, 2021
2:00 pm – 4:00 pm / ZOOM

Meeting commenced at **2:02pm**

1. Chair's Remarks

Discussion took place around the need for graduate students who are in a mental health crisis to utilize the *Early Alert Program* to connect to support resources. There is an upcoming meeting with the Health & Wellness team to discuss additional options in the event *Early Alert* is not enough.

The College is considering how the delivery of defenses will look in the future. Remote defenses have been working well. There will be consultation taking place and then brought forward to Grad Council as a motion in December.

There are campaigns to support international students find better support for English language skills.

Beginning the process to introduce Master's partial tuition award. It is an award but pays the student back the difference between international and domestic rates.

2. Introduction of new members

Everyone introduced themselves.

3. Standard reports (UBCSO & Senate)

UBCSUO report: The AGM be held November 25 @ 6:30pm-9:30pm in the ballroom, COM201. We are trying to make the graduate student committee permanent (it currently exists as an ad hoc committee). Questions regarding communicating SUO information/events were discussed. There are concerns that not everyone uses social media and; therefore, do not know about any upcoming events or news. Students can use the Canvas shell that all grad students can enroll in. The SUO's goal is to create an information channel. Please email any suggestions to the SUO representative anytime.

Senate report: Tabled to next meeting.

4. Candidacy Exam

The process of candidacy exam and becoming a PhD candidate is not clear for many PhD students. In the following link: https://gradstudies.cms.ok.ubc.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/84/2018/11/Guidelines_Comprehensive_Examination_Process_Doctoral-Students_IGS.pdf. It was noted that these are the comprehensive guidelines for IGS only, and that each program has its own set of guidelines. These guidelines are required to be given to students starting their comprehensive examination processes.

5. Annual progress reports



Graduate students fill out a progress report every year. The content is designed to assess the student's progress in their research. However, there is no confidential (or anonymous) report to evaluate the student's satisfaction in the program. Having a way to assess PhD students' satisfaction in the program is very important to improve the quality of graduate experience at UBCO. The report can cover the following points:

- How do they evaluate the relationship with their supervisor(s)?
- How do they evaluate the support given by their supervisor(s)?
- What is their stress level?
- How do they evaluate their graduate program at UBCO?

Challenges are in implementation, and protection of the student. Some suggestions: maybe start with simple questions and then build up; it will still expose the student but maybe we could start with a general assessment. Different suggestions on how to approach: every three years we have CDN grad survey but does give some idea of general sense of health & well being. Issue with protecting current students – talk of an exit survey may be one tool that could help.

6. Scholarships and RA for Master students

PhD students are now granted a minimum of \$20,000 CAD per year as part of their RA at UBCO. Master students; however, still do not have a minimum RA stipend assigned for their enrollment at UBCO graduate studies program. This is a major topic that is raising many concerns among master students at UBCO.

Is CoGS willing to set a minimum RA stipend for master students? We are working toward guaranteed minimum funding for master students. It is on the agenda but it is not something you will see next year. Many programs on campus have minimum funding on campus for master students. You can push your program to put one in place while we work on institutional side.

The Student Union office can help bolster support for advocacy.

7. Available rooms for Graduate Students

Given the current hybrid nature of many undergraduate classes, as well as the COVID restrictions on the number of students per study room, most study rooms and available spaces on campus are booked ahead of time or unavailable. Therefore, engineering graduates are finding it hard to find a space to meet and/or study outside their office area. Spaces to meet or run a supervisory meeting is essentially difficult to find on campus. COM's space is just for grads. This can be booked through the library site. The Director of CoGS will ask for who books these rooms.

8. Offices for graduates

Offices assigned for engineering graduates are relatively small given the number of graduate students in the office area. Considering the capacity per office is essential for engineering graduate students comfort and progress efficiency.

Meeting adjourned at @ 3:32pm.