



**GRADUATE STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL
AGENDA
April 3rd, 2024
2:00-4:00pm /OM2-138 or ZOOM**

Attendees:

Adebayo, Miracle		Harper, Breanne	X	Sandler, Michael	
Ahmad, Hammad	X	Heth, Zach		Sharma, Akshta	
Al Barazi, Mariam	X	Khattar, Nataasha		Shatzko, Amanda	
Awotwi-Pratt, Stephanie	X	Kizza, Ronald		Steele, Andrew	
Conneely, Ryan		Kooijman, Allison		Singh, Shambhavi	X
Crawford, Carolyn		Manrique Hernandez, Johanna	X	Wiebe, Karin	X
Desai, Anajali		Monir, Rifah Rafia		Yang, Shirley	X
Gnyawali, Kaushal		Morshedzadeh, Yenganeh		Pratt, Daniela	X
Shiple, Paul	X	Roberts, Deanna		Bissell, Laura	

1. Chair’s Remarks

Today's meeting looks to be quite engaging given the recent changes in immigration requirements, and we're lucky to have Brandi Toplak from the Global Engagement Office joining us to answer any questions you might have. Don't forget about the upcoming 3MT competition this Tuesday (April 9th) at the Mary Irwin Theatre. It's free admission with catering provided – join us if you can (<https://gradstudies.ok.ubc.ca/3mt/>). Additionally, we will witness a significant milestone in GSAC history this coming Friday: the presentation of our Student Leadership Award, conceived right here in this room. While the winners remain confidential for now, rest assured they're highly deserving and a familiar face among us all.



2. Career Advising through GEO (Brandi Toplak)

Over the past few weeks, Brandi's role has involved supporting students through recent changes to the BC PNP, particularly focusing on assisting international students with residence and work-related issues. Notably, there won't be significant changes for bachelor's students or PhD students, except for a tweak in language requirements. However, some master's students will experience significant adjustment, now needing a one-year job offer, language proficiency, and registration with SIRS. The Global Engagement Office is conducting sessions with informative presentations to clarify these changes and discuss their implications for the future.

You can find upcoming events and workshops through this link

(<https://events.ok.ubc.ca/events/list/?tribe-bar-search=study+and+stay>). Further information

about BC PNP will be available in the fall, at which point we can schedule another meeting to discuss it further. You can also find more information about the Study and Stay program here:

<https://students.ok.ubc.ca/career-experience/global-pathways/study-and-stay/>.

Question: Can pursuing a PhD instead of securing a job offer suffice for immigration purposes?

Answer: No, entering a PhD will not be considered as a full-time job offer, but PhD candidates still retain their BC PNP eligibility with only a few small changes. For master's students graduating after January, showing supportive employment will be necessary to support their immigration journey. While this requirement poses challenges, the Global Engagement Office (GEO) RCIC PR Specialist is available to assist these students. However, for those pursuing a



doctorate, the existing stream remains effective for staying in Canada throughout the PhD, and no full-time job offer is required for this pathway.

Question: Is there any indication of the eligibility list for Masters programs expanding or incorporating more programs?

Answer: The current wording indicates that the eligibility list will be phased out in January 2025, leaving only three streams: Bachelors, Masters, and PhD. The phrasing "A masters student in any field" suggests that it will encompass any master's student in any program.

Question: What support is offered by UBC O for master's students?

Answer: The Global Engagement Office (GEO) provides lots of support options for all international students. The Study and Stay program offers a roadmap outlining the requirements for applying for Permanent Residency (PR) and guidance on seeking future job offers. Real-time support is available to navigate these changes, along with focus groups and drop-in sessions. Find more information at this link (<https://students.ok.ubc.ca/career-experience/global-pathways/study-and-stay/>).



3. Volunteers for Western Regional 3MT (Paul)

We are looking for volunteers for the Western Regional 3MT competition. We need 2-3 student volunteers on Wednesday, May 8th. It's a fantastic opportunity to meet graduate students from across Western Canada and showcase UBCO! Lunch will be provided at 11:30 am, followed by the 3MT starting at 2 pm, and a reception at 5 pm. If you're interested in volunteering, please email alicia.meehan@ubc.ca. We particularly need volunteers during lunch, but it would be great if you could stay for the full event day. Even if you can't volunteer we encourage you to come out and watch the event as it's always interesting and a good time.

4. UBC Generative AI and Graduate Advisory Group (Paul)

I am seeking a volunteer for an exciting opportunity to join the Generative AI and Graduate Education advisory committee. This cross-campus committee will delve into the opportunities and challenges presented by generative AI tools in the realm graduate education. Collaborating with the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (G+PS) and both Provost offices, we aim to establish reasonable guidelines to for appropriate applications of AI technology in the graduate context. With a rising number of misconduct cases related to generative AI usage, we recognize the urgent need for frameworks outlining proper utilization, acknowledgment of contributions, and ethical research practices. We are particularly in search of a dedicated student representative from UBC Okanagan to ensure the voice of our student body is heard



and valued within this committee. Please reach out to Paul via e-mail (paul.shiopley@ubc.ca) if you are interested in this opportunity.

5. BC PNP support for Graduate Students (Shirley Yang)

British Columbia is preparing for significant changes in its Provincial Nominee Program (BC PNP), set to take effect in January 2025. These changes will significantly impact international graduate students in the Faculty of Science, Faculty of Engineering, and Faculty of Health and Social Development.

UBC Okanagan College of Graduate Studies should provide enhanced support to international graduate students, especially those graduating within the next two years.

Some suggestions include:

- Provide support to students for scheduling thesis defenses, booking defense rooms, and receiving assistance with writing and grammar in their theses.
- cIRcle UBC should expedite the process of thesis approval or rejection.
- Graduate Admissions should expedite the process of confirming program completion to minimize the time between thesis approval and program completion confirmation.
- Expedited processing of enrollment letters and other documents crucial for immigration processes, such as study permit extensions and co-op applications.
- Enhancing mental health support services for students.

Response:



Regarding applications before January, focus group meet-ups will be held through GEO, and students are encouraged to share the link provided

(https://ubc.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_51j9oLQWQTc4tSu) for further engagement.

In response to concerns raised, it's acknowledged that holidays will occur, and students should plan accordingly. Assurance is given regarding room availability for defenses, including a designated room and the option for remote defenses. Upon program completion approval in cIRcle, typically, it takes a few business days for closure and issuance of program completion letters. While there might be slight delays in May due to Workday, the process should remain largely unchanged.

6. Other Business

Summer food options for Graduate Students (Hammad Ahmad)

Addressing the scarcity of food options during the summer months on campus, it's evident that many establishments close early or shut down entirely. To combat this, there's a suggestion to seek funding support for students to access more options, including essentials like instant coffee, granola bars, fruits, and free breakfast offerings. Collaboration with the Graduate Student Council (GSC) is proposed to brainstorm solutions, with Hammad scheduled to discuss this with them.



Additionally, last summer, EME featured a vending machine offering sandwiches and substantial food 24/7, which is no longer available but could be a valuable resource for students. Furthermore, there's a desire to source food from local, sustainable suppliers to reduce costs, with organizations like Kelowna Climate Coalition and EatImpact cited as potential partners in this endeavor.

Tax Clinic (Mariam Al Barazi)

The Student Union Okanagan (SUO) introduced a free tax clinic this year, yet many graduate students have encountered issues with responses to their inquiries, posing a challenge. With likely only two individuals managing the clinics, there may be limitations in addressing all inquiries effectively. Doing taxes for the first time, especially for newcomers to Canada or those with dependents, can be overwhelming. Thus, it's crucial to provide adequate support for such students navigating this process. Proposed solutions include utilizing resources like YouTube tutorials and creating infographics, possibly shared on UBCO social media platforms. Exploring alternative options like the CRA Find a Tax Clinic service is also suggested ([Free tax clinics - Canada.ca](https://www.cra.gc.ca/free-tax-clinic)). To address these concerns, Paul will reach out to the Global Engagement Office (G.E.O) to see if they are still providing support for this initiative.