

Council of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

Minutes of the meeting of the CGPS held on
Monday, September 24, 2012, 2:30 pm
New Music Building, Room A-832

Attendance:

Officers:

Martin Kreiswirth (Chair)

Muriel Auberger (Committee Secretary)

Elected Members:

Ali Jahanbani Ardakani, Hugh Bennett, France Bouthillier, Greg Brown, Nicole Couture, Helge Dedek, Jeff Gostick, Louis Houle, Bettina Kemme, Guillaume Lord, Jonathan Mooney, Josephine Nalbantoglu, Nathaniel Qutoriano, Ned Schantz, Ingrid Sladeczek, Eleanor Stubley and David Wolfson.

Ex-Officio:

Shari Baum, Lissa Matyas, Laura Nilson and Lisa Travis.

Regrets:

Adam Bouchard, Roger Cue, Maedeh Khayyat Kholghi, Kristin Norget and Simon Tran.

Absent:

Robin Beech, Hatem Dokainish, Ziad El-Khatib, Richard Greydanus, Patricia Kirkpatrick, Saibal Ray, Carrie Rentschler, Isabelle Rouiller,

Order was called at 2:30 pm

The Chair, Dean Kreiswirth, welcomed the new members for this academic year and proceeded with a round table introduction of all the members.

100 Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted as presented.

101 Approval of Minutes

CGPS.12.01

On a motion by Prof. Bennett, seconded by Mr. Houle, the minutes of the May 23, 2012 meeting were approved. All in favour.

102 Business Arising from the Minutes

a) Web Update:

Dean Kreiswirth announced that the GPS website was updated and will migrate to a new format on Wednesday. The goal of this change is to facilitate navigation of the website. Ms. Matyas pointed out that the new website will house the updated GPS forms and asked members to ensure that all previously-used forms are destroyed. Dean Kreiswirth invited members to provide their input on the new website.

b) Guidelines for Thesis Preparation, Submission and Examination

Dean Kreiswirth referred members to documents CGPS.12.02 and CGPS.12.03 and explained that in response to suggestions by graduate students, faculty members and recommendations by the Committee for Student Grievances, two revisions to the thesis examination procedures and policies are being brought forward for discussion and approval:

- Language of “Fail” v. “Not Pass”

CGPS.12.02

A number of members of the McGill community have suggested that it would be more accurate to use the language of “not pass” rather than “fail” in our thesis examination documents, since GPS procedures allow all students whose theses do not pass the thesis examination the opportunity to revise and resubmit the thesis and then undergo a second examination. For many, “fail” has connotations of finality and conclusion and, from this point of view, would thus be inappropriate to describe a process in which the thesis may be examined again. External examiners have also been confused by this language. Consequently, GPS has suggested that “fail” in the thesis guidelines and in examination forms be changed to “not pass” (or similar phrases consistent with grammatical usage.)

Council discussed the issue and agreed with the change. Since the revision is not substantive but merely an alteration of vocabulary, it does not need to be approved by APC or Senate. GPS will change the thesis guidelines and examination forms at the next opportunity to revise the web.

- Challenge vs. Bias procedures

CGPS.12.03

Dean Kreiswirth described the current thesis challenge procedures and explained that, following recommendations from the Committee for Student Grievances, policies and processes regarding allegations of bias, error, or serious misrepresentation on the part of the examiner should be re-examined and duly revised to better reflect the thesis examination goals and principles of natural justice. He brought a draft revision to Council as a first step in considering this change in policy.

The Challenge Hearing was designed so that the student would have recourse outside the normal examination process if he/she felt that bias, error, or serious misrepresentation on the part of the examiner was the reason that the thesis was not passed--rather than its scholarly or scientific merit. However, the existing regulations state that “A challenge will seldom be heard unless the thesis has been failed after the revise and resubmit process,” and thus somehow imply that bias, error, or serious misunderstanding on the part of the examiner could only occur in a second examination

failure. Moreover, by suggesting that a challenge would not occur until the thesis failed twice, most students and supervisors viewed the challenge process as yet another attempt to judge the substantive scholarly and /or scientific merits of the thesis, not specifically addressed to issues of bias (despite the clear instructions). The challenge is, of course, not about whether or not a thesis has substantive merit, but whether or not a student has been the victim of bias, error, or serious misrepresentation on the part of the examiner. The proposed new process attempts to avoid this confusion by separating the challenge process from the revise and resubmit process.

The draft of proposed revisions to the examination policy and procedures were discussed and there was agreement that it clarified the issue and made the process much fairer and more transparent. By including the student in the hearing, it also supported the Committee on Student Grievance recommendation.

Dean Kreiswirth thanked the members for their input and indicated that more consultations will be held (primarily with the Advisory Committee and GPDs) and then, if supported by the community, would come back to council for approval. If approved at Council the new examination policies and procedures would then go to APC for approval, and then Senate.

103 New Business

a) SCTP Summary Report 1

Approved Revised Programs

CGPS.12.04

This document is being presented for information to members.

b) SCTP Summary Report 1

Approved New, Revised and Retired Courses

CGPS.12.05

This document is being presented for information to members.

c) SCTP Summary Report 2

Approved Revised Programs

CGPS.12.06

This document is being presented for information to members.

d) SCTP Summary Report 2

Approved New, Revised and Retired Courses

CGPS.12.07

This document is being presented for information to members.

e) Student Exchange Agreement – Universiteit Leiden/Leiden University

CGPS.12.08

Dean Kreiswirth referred members to document CGPS.12.08 and briefly explained that, as previously approved Student Exchange Agreements, the exchange with Leiden University conforms to McGill's exchange agreement terms.

On a motion by Prof. Kemme, seconded by Prof. Wilson, all were in favor to approve the amended Student Exchange Agreement with Leiden University. Motion carried.

104 Other Business

- a) **Graduation Dates:** Prof. Nalbantoglu brought up the issue of the e-thesis submissions that must be made by a certain date to obtain guaranteed graduation by a certain date. She asked if it would be possible to extend those dates closer to the Senate deadline. Dean Kreiswirth explained that submitting after the established dates cannot provide a guarantee but it does provide a possibility. Ms. Matyas will look into the matter and report back to the members.
- b) **New Integrated Services:** Prof. Nalbantoglu pointed out that the integrated services at Service Point do not work. Dean Kreiswirth asked her to provide him with concrete examples in order to address the matter.

Dean Kreiswirth encouraged members to submit items for discussion prior to the Council meetings.

There being no further business, all were in favour to adjourn the meeting at 4:25 pm.