

Council of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

Wednesday, September 8, 2021 2:00 to 4:00 pm Virtual Meeting

Attendance at FGSR Council - September 8, 2021

DEPARTMENT/UNIT FACULTY REPRESENTATIVES Present:

en Willing		
Marko Zivkovic		
oan Greer		
avid Stuart		
eborah McKenzie		
lichael Maier		
rish Reay		
chard Wozniak		
ao Zhang		
lichael Serpe		
elma Guigard		
ictor Liu		
Ionique Charest		
nomas Barker		
reg Kondrak		
reg Kondrak		
efano Muneroni		
rturo Sanchez		
avid Quinter		
eather Eckert		
arryl Hunter		
eronica Smith		
ouglas Gleddie		
lahdi Tavakoli		
udy Cardinal		
amira El Atia		
ouglas Gleddie		
largriet Haagsma		
achel McQueen		
Ionika Keelan		
ormand Boule		
nda Reif		
inesh Rathi		
hanne Paradis		
nristoph Frei		
exandra Komrakova		
dan Foley		
ena Posse de Chaves		
adia Jahroudi		
ene Sywenky		
lichael Frishkopf		

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Nursing (non-departmentalized)	Dianne Tapp
Obstetrics & Gynecology (Medical Sciences)	Denise Hemmings
Occupational Therapy	Mary Roduta Roberts
Oncology	Alan Underhill
Oncology	Gordon Chan
Pharmacology	Frances Plane
Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences (non-departmentalized)	Arno Siraki
Philosophy	Ingo Brigandt
Physical Therapy	Mark Hall
Physics	Craig Heinke
Political Science	Jared Wesley
Psychiatry	Allen Chan
Psychology	Chris Westbury
Rehabilitation Medicine - Rehabilitation Sciences	Patricia (Trish) Manns
Resource Economics & Environmental Sociology	Henry An
School of Public Health (non-departmentalized)	Ruth Wolfe
Secondary Education	Bonnie Watt
Surgery	Fred Berry
Agricultural, Food & Nutritional Science	Ben Willing
Anthropology	Marko Zivkovic
Art & Design	Joan Greer
Biochemistry	David Stuart
Biological Sciences	Deborah McKenzie
Business (non-departmentalized) - MBA	Michael Maier
Business (non-departmentalized) - PhD	Trish Reay

Regrets Sent:

Pediatrics (Medical Sciences)
Radiology & Diagnostic Imaging (Medical Sciences)

Absent:

Biomedical Engineering

Dentistry (Medical Sciences)

Digital Humanities

English and Film Studies

Internetworking (MINT)

Kinesiology, Sport, and Recreation (non-departmentalized)

Medical Genetics (Medical Sciences)

Native Studies (non-departmentalized)

Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences (Medical Sciences)

Physiology

Renewable Resources

Sociology

Women's and Gender Studies



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ASSOCIATE DEANS (GRADUATE) REPRESENTATIVES FOR DEPARTMENTALIZED FACULTIES

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Arts	Kim Noels
Education	Doug Gleddie
Medicine & Dentistry	Greg Funk
Rehabilitation Medicine	Trish Manns

Regrets Sent:

Agricultural, Life and Environmental Sciences (ALES) Leluo Guan Engineering Tian Tang

Absent:

Science Mark McDermott

EX-OFFICIO REPRESENTATIVES

Present:

FGSR Dean & Vice-Provost (FGSR Council Chair)	Brooke Milne
FGSR Vice-Dean	Ali Shiri
FGSR Associate Dean	Andrea MacLeod
FGSR Associate Dean	Frances Plane
FGSR Associate Dean	Micah True
FGSR Associate Dean	Samer Adeeb
Vice-Provost and University Registrar (or Delegate)	Carlo Dimailig

Regrets Sent:

Vice-President (Research) (or Delegate)	Laura Beard
Vice-Provost and Chief Librarian (or Delegate)	Dale Askey

Absent:

President (or delegate)

Chair, FGSR Academic Appeals Committee*
Director, Centre for Teaching & Learning*

Moin Yahya

Janice Miller-Young

GRADUATE PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS COMMITTEE (GPAC) REPRESENTATIVES

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Department of Neuroscience

Amber LaPointe

GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION (GSA) DIRECTLY ELECTED OFFICIALS (3) & GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION (GSA) COUNCIL (20) REPRESENTATIVES

Present:

Jessica Grenke
Nicole Dittmann
Sania Amiri-Ishani
Nayiar Shahid
Andrew Locke
Megan Sommerfeld
Shing Kit Lao

Absent / Alternates:

VP Academic

VP External (Alternate)

VP Student Services (Alternate)

Kathy Haddadkar Mohd Tahsin Bin Mostafa

Paresh Kumar

Vacant GSA Council Members – 14 seats

OBSERVERS - NON-VOTING

FGSR, HR & Operations Coordinator*	Medha Samarasinghe
FGSR Executive Assistant & Operations *	Andrea Riewe
FGSR, EA to the Associate Deans*	Dena Giroux
FGSR Professional Development & Community Volunteer Program Director*	Deanna Davis
FGSR, Admissions & Program Services Supervisor*	Joyce Anderson
FGSR, Supervisor, Graduate Awards*	Amanda Brown
FGSR, Director, Professional Development*	Renee Polziehn
FGSR, Functional Analyst*	Justine Gill
Graduate Ombudsperson*	Remonia Stoddart- Morrison
FGSR Program Services Team Lead*	Kris MacManus
Presenter: Professor, Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences*	Raimar Loebenberg
Presenter: Senior International Agreements Administrator, UAI*	Shawn Heinz

^{*}Non-Voting





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FGSR Council September 8, 2021

1.0 Call to Order at 2:02 PM

Vice-Provost and Dean, Brooke Milne, called the meeting to order.

She welcomed new and returning members of Council to the first meeting of the 2021-22 academic year. She noted that members requiring further support with the virtual platform may reach out to Andrea Riewe for help. Those with voting abilities received an email with links; they were asked to have this open and ready to go.

As this is the first meeting of the year, Dean Milne drew attention to some questions that have arisen over the last couple of months. Observers, while welcome to attend FGSR Council meetings, may neither participate in debate nor vote.

She also clarified that as per the regulations, a notice of motion is a written advance notice that a motion will be presented and debated at a future meeting of the Council. For issues of substance, it has been the practice of FGSR Council that a notice of motion be presented at least one month prior to the date of submission of the motion. This enables councilors to discuss the issue and, if necessary, to obtain feedback from their home units and respective faculty councils. However, this advanced notice is not provided for every motion, as noted, just ones that are considered substantive in nature.

2.0 Approval of Agenda for Sept 8, 2021

Moved / Seconded: Greg Funk/Doug Gleddie

Discussion / Questions: No objections to the agenda were raised.

Approved by consent.

3.0 Approval of Minutes of May 23, 2021

Moved / Seconded: Sania Amiri-Ishani/Samira El Atia

Discussion / Questions: None **Approved by electronic vote.**

4.0 <u>Matters Arising from the Minutes</u>

No matters arising from the minutes.

5.0 Report from the Dean

Vice-Provost and Dean Milne informed members that COVID-19 continues to impact the campus community. There are resources available for students and supervisors on FGSR's website should they wish to consult them. The website will also have links to the most up to date information as we know this continues to be an evolving matter.

The University continues to work through the UAT and SET initiatives. There are two groups currently working on graduate administration, one being the Student Services stream which is looking at the administrative functions, and the second is the Academic Leaders Task Group which is an advisory group convened by the



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Provost to look at the academic aspects of graduate administration. It is anticipated that the groups will be bringing forward recommendations/proposals in early October.

As conversations about restructuring continue, Dean Milne requested that Council members reach out to FGSR if their faculties and departments are planning any graduate program reorganization. These changes, which pass through governance, have impacts on the operational side of graduate administration, and advance notice is useful for ensuring there are no delays with the systems and processes.

Earlier in August, FGSR sent a note about deferrals. While travel restrictions have begun to ease for some countries, backlogs related to student study permits and travel visas persist. To provide clarity and direction on program admission deferrals for international graduate students, academic units should consider the following:

- For international students who have not yet deferred a program admission start date:
 - Units can request a deferral for up to the 12-month maximum as outlined in the policy
 - FGSR can work with units to extend term-by-term, COVID-19 related deferrals for the 2021-22 academic year up to a maximum of 12 months from the student's original program start date
- For international students who have already deferred a program admission start date:
 - Units can request second deferrals for students so long as they do not exceed the normal 12month maximum
 - The policy states that after this maximum period of time, students must normally submit a new application with updated information on their education pursued/completed since the first application was submitted
- For non-COVID-19 related admission deferral requests, the admission deferral policy as approved in the Calendar applies where an academic unit may request one revised admission date (i.e. one deferral) for up to one year from the student's original program start date as cited in their admission letter.
- In all instances where a student is considering an admission deferral, units are advised to remind them of two potential financial implications: a delayed start may affect their program fees and any funding (awards, stipends, scholarships) may be forfeited due to availability, requirements stipulated by funding agencies, or the discretion of the academic unit and supervisor. Students should be referred to the relevant sections of the Calendar on Graduate Admissions and Revised Admission Changes to Admission Start Date for further information.

Dean Milne drew attention to the change in format to the Written Report. Going forward, the report will focus on key operational updates. Many of these updates are also circulated in the Student and Staff newsletters on a biweekly basis.

The Council package also includes the FGSR Guide for Equitable Review of Graduate Scholarship applications. Former Associate Dean, Tracy Ravio, and the Awards team have put this together as well as a one page reference document. These will also be posted on the FGSR website.

Since this is the first meeting of the academic year, we will take some time to provide a brief overview of FGSR's structure and mandate, and the role and responsibilities of Council within the larger university governance structure. Dean Milne introduced Medha Samarasinghe, HR and Operations Coordinator, to provide an introduction of FGSR's key units.



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The FGSR consists of the following key units: The decanal team consists of the Vice-Provost and Dean, the Vice Dean, and four Associate Deans. The student facing units include Admissions, Program Services, Awards & Scholarships, Office Services, and Professional Development. These five teams interact directly with students from the point of being prospective students and applicants, through to registering in the grad programs, and all the way until convocation. They also receive support from our teams to meet their professional development and ethics, training requirements, as well as opportunities for awards and scholarships, and other administrative needs, such as loans and enrollment verifications. The rest of the teams: systems, records, and operations, support the front facing teams, the decanal team, and the faculty. In addition to the six decanal team members,, FGSR has 32 professional staff that work to serve over 8200 grad students, and work with our academic and administrative counterparts in graduate programs across the institution.

Ms. Samarasinghe also outlined the key relationship between FGSR's academic and administrative teams, and the graduate program advisors and grad chairs in the departments. These groups work in collaboration on many student matters.

Vice-Dean Ali Shiri reviewed the FGSR mandate and reviewed the FGSR's decision-making process for student cases.

The FGSR mandate: Guided by university policy, clear program standards, and process-oriented service excellence, FGSR works collaboratively with graduate students, supervisors, departments, and faculties to enhance financial supports, provide relevant and timely programming and resources, and to ensure equity, accessibility, and transparency in administrative decisions, all of which serve to create a positive student experience and increased student success.

The one page document shows that the decision making on student cases is rooted in the values of equity, transparency, student success, quality, and consistency. The academic decisions on student cases are made by drawing on a wide range of sources of information, evidence and policies such as, the University of Alberta calendar, the graduate program manual, faculty, department, and program specific regulations, the Code of Student Behavior, and the Code of Applicant Behavior, collective agreements, and the institutional strategic plan, among others. In handling these cases, and in making decisions, sometimes there are policy gaps or new policies that need to be developed.

Dean Milne introduced the decanal team:

- Ali Shiri, Vice-Dean (School of Library and Information Sciences, Education)
 Portfolio Includes: Quality Assurance, Special Collaborative Projects, Data and Digital Initiatives
- Andrea MacLeod, Associate Dean (Communication Sciences and Disorders, Rehab Med)
 Portfolio Includes: Course Based Master's and Professional Programs; Equity, Diversity and Inclusion;
 Indigenous initiatives
- Frances Plane, Associate Dean (Pharmacology, FoMD)
 Portfolio: New Program Development and Program Changes, International Agreements; University Governance
- Micah True, Associate Dean (Modern Languages and Cultural Studies, Arts)
 Portfolio Includes: FGSR Institutional Academic Regulations, Strategic Programming
- Samer Adeeb, Associate Dean (Civil and Environmental ENGG)
 Portfolio Includes: Awards and Scholarships



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Over the summer, FGSR made some adjustments to the portfolios of the Associate Deans. These are roughly parallel to the College disciplinary compositions. Having worked within these divisions for nearly a year now, the Associate Deans have been able to develop more focused discipline-specific working relationships with the ADs-Grad from the Faculties and the Associate Chairs across departments. We will be sending a copy of this program reconfiguration out to you before the end of this week. We will also post it on our website for easy access.

The FGSR Council is constituted by legislation set out in the *Post-Secondary Learning Act*, and it operates under delegated authorities from the Board of Governors and General Faculties Council. The FGSR Council:

- Approves minimum University standards on all aspects of graduate education, including minimum admission standards, time limits for the completion of program milestones, and residency requirements
- Approves graduate policy that oversees the administration graduate programs
- Approves the creation of all new graduate credentials and new graduate programs, including graduate programs under the Shared Credential Policy
- Deals with any other such matters as are brought forward to it from time to time by the Vice-Provost and Dean, FGSR.

FGSR Standing Committees:

- Graduate Scholarship Committee
- Academic Appeals Committee
- Policy Review Committee

There is now a new navigation tab on our website (top right hand side) called 'Policies,' a one-stop place where you can access policies, guidelines and regulations, including access to the U of A Calendar, Graduate Program Manual, FGSR policy updates. We also post previous meeting minutes and the committee schedule on the website.

Council reps attend Council meetings and act as unit spokespersons in all matters relating to graduate programs. They are also responsible for informing faculty and graduate students in their units of decisions, recommendations, and information emanating from the FGSR Council meetings. FGSR Council is also the main forum for leading discussions on the future directions of Graduate Education across all of U of A campuses.

Only councilors or properly appointed alternates may vote in FGSR Council meetings. Each councilor (or properly appointed alternate) shall have one vote on all motions presented at the Council. Some councilor positions have been designated as non-voting memberships; these councilors may not vote. The Chair does not vote except to decide a tied vote. In this instance, the Chair may vote for or against the motion (in which case the motion is carried or lost, respectively) or the Chair may choose to abstain (in which case the motion is lost for lack of a majority vote). All members of FGSR Council are charged with the responsibility of examining issues before Council and voting as they judge fit on such issues. No member of FGSR Council, regardless of how that person gains membership on Council, is an instructed delegate.

As has been past practice, Council is given the opportunity (often more than once) to consider, discuss, and provide feedback on policy and program proposals affecting graduate education and graduate student experience/success. As such, when an item is included on the agenda, it will return for action at a later time but not until it is reviewed and recommended by GPST, PRC, and in some instances, GEFAC.



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Agendas and related materials are distributed one week prior to the scheduled meeting. The Council meetings will continue to be held virtually for at least the Fall 2021 term. The meeting format for Winter 2022 will be assessed later in the fall term as we consider public health measures at that time.

Questions/ Comments: None.

6.0 GSA Monthly Report

The GSA shared their report and the new Executive members in attendance introduced themselves.

Questions/Discussion: None

7.0 Item 7.0: USP/Pharmacy Dual Degree (Renewal)

Dean Milne introduced Mr. Shawn Heinz. Mr. Heinz noted that this renewal brings the format up to date with the current template wording, and updates it to the current norms and standards.

Dr. Raimar Löbenberg noted that the dual degree has been in place since 2011. The program has been a success and students taking it have been able to find jobs in industry. The program adds value to the degree and there is a current demand for it.

Moved / Seconded: Trish Reay/ Sania Amiri-Ishani

MOTION: Be it resolved that FGSR Council approve the Dual Degree Proposal between the UNIVERSIDADE DE SÃO PAULO and the Faculty of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences at the University of Alberta, for implementation upon final approval.

Questions/Discussion: None **Approved by electronic vote.**

8.0 Graduate Scholarship Committee (GSC) Members

Dean Milne introduced the renewed membership of the Graduate Scholarship Committee and asked Council to approve the list.

Moved/Seconded: Greg Funk/ Samira El Atia

MOTION: Be it resolved that FGSR Council approve the new and returning members of the Graduate Scholarship Committee (GSC) as listed*, and for immediate inclusion on the committee.

Questions/Discussion: None **Approved by electronic vote.**





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9.0 Policy Review Committee (PRC) Members

Dean Milne asked members of Council to review the updated membership list for the Policy Review Committee.

Moved/Seconded: Samira El Atia/ Alan Underhill

MOTION: Be it resolved that the FGSR Council approve the members of the FGSR Policy Review Committee as listed*, and for immediate implementation.

Questions/Discussion: None **Approved by electronic vote.**

10.0 Graduate Program Support Team (GPST) Members

Dean Milne asked members of Council to approve the members of the Graduate Program Support Team as listed for immediate implementation.

Moved/Seconded: Alan Underhill/ Trish Reay

MOTION: Be it resolved that FGSR Council approve the members of the Graduate Program Support Team as listed*, and for immediate implementation.

Questions/Discussion: A note to amend that Linda Reif is an Associate Dean, Graduate not an Associate Chair. **Approved by electronic vote.**

11.0 Approval of Degrees Notwithstanding a Deficiency

Dean Milne reminded Council members that this is the third time that this type of approval is coming to this group. This proposal is asking the Council to consider the students who have been impacted by the Credit/No Credit grading scheme in the winter of 2020 academic term, due to the complications of COVID-19. These students have all completed the requirements for their respective degree programs, but their GPAs are just below the required 2.7, which is required to be considered in good academic standing. The students have received grades and also a note of Credit/ No Credit on their transcripts. If they had been able to get an actual grade they likely would have had an average over 2.7; however, because they received grades of Credit in the winter 2020 it has impacted their GPA.

Council is the body that approves the list of students that have been approved by their programs to be included on the convocation list each spring and fall. Dean Milne asked Council to consider these two student cases and vote on approving them to be on the convocation list for Fall 2021.

Moved/Seconded: Samer Adeeb/ Sania Amiri-Ishani

MOTION: Be it resolved that the FGSR Council approve those students being recommended to convocate in Fall 2021 with their respective degrees notwithstanding a deficiency related to the 2.7 minimum GPA required to be considered in good academic standing. These students have all been affected by the CR/NC grading scheme adopted by the University of Alberta in response to the disruption to Winter 2020 due to COVID-19.





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Questions/Discussion:

A Council member clarified that the list was for two students and the number listed next to them is the GPA and the courses they took that were graded as CR/NC.

Approved by electronic vote.

12.0 GSA Monthly Report and Strategic Plan

GSA President Anas Fassih introduced himself. The monthly report is as submitted. Mr Fassih briefly outlined the GSAs strategic plan for the 2021-22 academic year. The plan is built on the three pillars of connection, support, and advocacy. They are guided by the University of Alberta's (UAT) strategic plan, the GSAs EDI committee, and also their seat on the provincial Alberta Grad students council where they can interact with the Minister of Advanced Education. The GSA supports graduate student physical mental health and wellness. The GSA believes that the graduate student population is very different from the undergrads; there are students who have responsibilities, either parents or students who have spent time outside outside school before coming back to school. The GSA supports parents and caregivers through child care support and funding. The GSA also advocates for funding supports for grad students, and various equity seeking grad student groups on campus, and works to ensure that all grad students have a quality experience. The strategic plan is a living document that will evolve over the academic year.

Finally, Mr Fassih noted that the GSA is also a union for academically employed graduate students. He introduced the VP Labour Jessica Grenke to provide a brief introduction.

Ms Grenke announced the development of a union fund this year. They are also developing a stewardship network in which students will be deputized for each of the faculties. These students will be able to create outreach and connections on a grassroots level with student organizations.

13.0 Intro discussion on the Conduct of Exams Calendar Work

Dean Milne introduced Associate Dean, Micah True, to provide an overview of the conduct of exams in the calendar. He will be reviewing the language in the Calendar around exams, especially PhD exams. He is doing this because there have been some difficulties that have arisen, due in part, to the lack of clarity or ambiguity in the language. Examples where more clarity is needed are around the arm's length examiner, issues of co-authorship, and teleconferencing issues, especially in light of the changes we have made due to Covid-19.

Associate Dean True noted that he will be doing an environmental scan of peer institutions and their policies on exams in addition to convening a working group to formulate recommendations to the PRC before bringing some revised regulations back to Council for consideration and discussion.

There was a wide ranging discussion and council members raised the following issues as possible areas to develop further or clarify in the Calendar on the issue of PhD Exams.

- Public defenses rather than closed defences: What is common practice? Are there disciplinary differences to consider?
- Flexibility in language and policy to account for community engaged research and the different approaches to how research is conducted.



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- Outcomes of doctoral exams: Clarity on how the External Examiners' feedback is weighted in relation to the rest of the committee. (ex. if the External Examiner fails the exam then the whole defence fails even if the rest are ready to pass it). The calendar language could be clarified to indicate that the exam should not proceed if the external has failed the exam.
- Clarity between the definition and role of external examiners and external readers.
- Are externals able to withhold their decision until after the actual defense?
- Clarity on when a pro-dean is required to attend and what their role is in the exam.
- Clarity on the practice of passing the thesis before the defence; instances of a strong thesis but poor student performance at the defense. How does this practice apply to an external reader who does provide feedback about if a thesis should pass before the defense?
- Clarity on the rules for External Examiners so that their approach to examining is somewhat standardized and there are built-in 'escape routes' if their line of questioning is unconventional or out of bounds. The role of the ProDean and the Office of the Dean, FGSR would intervene.
- Do the other exam members get to see the external examiner's report? Do they get to see it in the event that the report suggests the exam should not proceed? Language in the Calendar is unclear. The Calendar does have clear details about the length and format of the external examiner's report.
- A recent job posting for a Thesis Coordinator role within FGSR is part of a pilot project that FGSR is
 undertaking in collaboration with the departments of Physics and Bio Sci. In the pilot, FGSR's thesis
 Coordinator will be the key contact who is responsible for verifying the External Examiner and contacting
 them throughout the defense process. This procedural process will be aligned with the evolving policies
 that AD True will be working on throughout the term.

14.0 Questions

A Council member inquired about how the Credit/No Credit grading system might impact students who are applying, or considered, for scholarships and awards.

Amanda Brown, FGSR's Awards and Scholarships Supervisor, explained that GPA calculations for awards are not taking into account those grades. Most awards, including Tri Council awards, have opportunities to clarify and provide context including addressing potential lower GPAs due to the Credit/No Credit grades. With Department specific awards or interdepartmental awards, which are the university held awards, if students' GPAs are below the 3.5 threshold, FGSR will ask the department to submit a letter of justification or explanation for the grade and will take into account as part of the adjudication.

Dean Milne added that FGSR will be acting with compassion, and as much understanding as possible to ensure that students are not penalized for the Credit/No Credit assessment due to Covid-19.

15.0 Adjournment

Vice-Provost and Dean Milne thanked Council members for their attendance and participation.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:44 PM.