

**DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
FACULTY COUNCIL**

These minutes have been approved.

A regular meeting of Faculty Council was held at 11:30 am, Tuesday, December 13, 2016, in the Lord Dalhousie Room.

Present: J. Bluestein, S. Boe, T. Currie, E. Denovan-Wright, S. Gadbois, P. Gardiner Barber, D. Groulx, D. Iron, B. Johnston, E. Joubert, B. Karten, A. Kirk (Secretary), J. Kozey, J. M. Lee (Chair), M. Leonard, R. Martin-Misener (Vice Chair), H. MacFadyen, H. Niu, D. Pelzer, L. Robinson, B. Sabo, S. Stone, S. Wells, J. Wilson

Regrets: H. Ali-Hassan, M. Durier-Copp, M. Kabbara, A. Kane, G. Loomer, R. Mullin, E. Reeve, P. Tyedmers

FC 16.17.27 Call to Order and Approval of Agenda

It was moved by Dieter Pelzer seconded by Shaun Boe: to approve the Faculty Council agenda for November 22, 2016 as circulated. The motion carried.

FC 16.17.28 Approval of the Minutes of previous Faculty Council meeting

It was moved by Pauline Gardiner Barber seconded by Shaun Boe: to approve the minutes from November 22, 2016 as circulated. The motion carried.

FC 16.17.29 Matters Arising

a) Subcommittees for FC

Further to last month's discussion on governance and structure of Faculty Council, M. Lee indicated that further subcommittees will be developed early in the new year. In addition to APCC and Appeals Subcommittees, new subcommittees would at a minimum include those for Policy, Scholarship and Nominating. Terms of Reference and establishment of these committees will be developed. It is a reasonable expectation that everyone on Faculty Council should serve on at least one subcommittee.

We are in current need of four additional members of Faculty Council to review NSGS applications. Applications will go out before the holidays, and decisions need to be made by the end of January. D. Pelzer was asked about current representation gaps, and noted we currently have two members from PEAS, and one each from Electrical & Computer Engineering, Sociology, and Microbiology & Immunology. D. Pelzer added that one group will do Masters and the other will do PhD. The following four members volunteered: H. Niu, S. Boe, L. Robinson and M. Lee. Further volunteers are encouraged to contact D. Pelzer.

b) APCC Membership

Heading into January, APCC does not have quorum. M. Lee will be reaching out to individuals to fill current gaps in APCC, especially seeking representation from Health, Medicine, FASS, and Management.

FC 16.17.30 Reports

i) Dean (Marty Leonard)

No report

ii) Associate Dean (Dieter Pelzer)

No report

iii) Associate Dean (Eileen Denovan-Wright)

No report

iv) PDF Report

No report (no representative present)

v) DAGS

No report (no representative present)

FC 16.17.31 Discussion: Policy on Student Absences (E. Huner)

E. Huner introduced the draft policy noting she has twice been to SLTC and is now in the final round of consultations, involving all Faculty Councils. The need for this policy arises as over 90% of student visits to student health services seeking sick notes are marked “no medical evidence”. Either the student visited after the fact, or was not then demonstrating symptoms. This practice is causing significant strain on the unit, especially during exam weeks.

The hope is to encourage students to be more accountable for their submission of work and attendance at exams, and to help those students with chronic illness to understand that they can ask for suitable accommodation. Key benefits include instilling trust and reducing stress for students, reducing administrative burdens for Faculties, and requiring students to seek academic assistance (through Advising) in a timely manner for recurring or long-term absences. It would also allow the University to differentiate between short term, long term, and recurring absences as well as providing a mechanism for tracking absences.

E. Huner further noted that a pilot project was successfully launched in the Faculty of Computer Science with no complaints. The faculty has conveyed a desire to continue the pilot into the new term.

J. Blustein expressed concern about the system being open to abuse. E. Huner pointed out that it was launched at the University of Alberta and they saw no increase in requests and no evidence of abuse. P. Gardiner Barber enquired about the mechanism for faculty notification. E. Huner re-iterated that the hope is to largely go paperless and rely on Brightspace, but where that is not possible (or faculty members are not using that platform), email or a paper form would suffice.

M. Leonard sought clarity around the requirement for seeking access/advising and what the results of that would be. E. Huner confirmed that it means the student is required to demonstrate the effort to seek the service, and the advisor would then inform the instructor of the outcome (whether a given request is deemed to be legitimate).

L. Robinson asked about the extent of consultation with the counselling centre and counsellors. E. Huner confirmed that while the centre was consulted, individual counsellors were not. L. Robinson further noted that there would be a need for language around (i) students that need seen quickly upon an initial request, and (ii) protection of student confidentiality around health status etc.

S. Gadbois commented on success with similar methods in his department (Psychology & Neuroscience) commenting that there didn't appear to be an overall increase in absences or abuse of the system.

D. Groulx queried the language around informing of instructors and TA's. In Engineering these issues go straight to the Associate Dean Undergraduate so matters are dealt with consistently. E. Huner reiterated that ADAC was consulted and approved the language around who is informed. She also added that an operational syllabus in a given course would supersede the University-level policy.

There was extended conversation and consensus that the policy should apply to undergraduates and (in principle at least) only to course-based graduate students. Research and thesis-based graduate students should in general be exempt from such a policy, even in courses where no syllabus exists. D. Pelzer suggested there be language added to the policy to acknowledge not all courses are covered by a syllabus. E. Denovan-Wright offered that it may be prudent to engage Faculties/departments (and possibly APCC) in sharing creative solutions for building suitable syllabi.

E. Huner departed, however discussion continued.

There was consensus that departments/faculties should develop best practices on how to handle the policy, and its possible exemptions, through local graduate education committees (or the equivalent). There was also consensus that examinations such as comprehensives and defences should be exempt from the policy. T. Currie noted the policy addresses short-term absences of less than three days, long-term absences of more than three days, but no language for an absence of exactly three days, which may present a loophole.

ACTION: A. Kirk will compile feedback based on discussion at this meeting and share with E. Huner. Any additional feedback members may send other feedback directly to E. Huner.

FC 16.17.32 Search Committee for FGS Associate Dean (Academic) (M. Leonard)

After some discussion, M. Leonard agreed that, as chair of the Search Committee, she will be a non-voting member except in case of a tie vote among members present. D. Groulx enquired as to the length of the term for the new Associate Dean (Academic). M. Leonard responded that it is five years. P. Gardiner Barber asked if there was a job description, M. Leonard responded that it is still being finalized but can be made available to Council when approved by the Provost & VP Academic.

It was moved by M. Leonard seconded by J. Blustein: to approve the membership list for the Search Committee for a new FGS Associate Dean (Academic) as circulated. The motion carried. Two Council members (proposed members of the Search Committee) abstained.

FC 16.17.33 Introduction to “Rethinking the PhD” (M. Leonard, R. Klein)

By way of introduction, M. Leonard instructed that the discussion at this meeting serves only to help Council understand the CAGS committee’s work on this subject. It will also start the broader conversation with the University community, seeding a larger group discussion (with invitation to graduate coordinators and department heads/chairs/directors) in the spring.

R. Klein was invited to join and provided some background on the CAGS committee, which includes as members three Deans of Graduate Studies, four faculty members at large (R. Klein included) and a graduate student. There is a separate CAGS committee looking at PhD comprehensive exams through a similar lens, and it is his suggestion that those two groups should ultimately collaborate.

Consultation with the Dalhousie community was initiated via a survey distributed to all members of FGS. It was later discovered that this may have been premature, as it predated the circulated draft document designed by the committee to provide more information and guide respondents. Subsequently, CAGS is now circulating a bilingual cover letter and a draft discussion paper. This has not reached the Dalhousie community broadly; therefore Council will circulate the cover letter and draft discussion paper widely to invite feedback via R. Klein. FGS Faculty Council will also convene a forum (with Council acting as the host) to discuss.

After some discussion, it was further noted that the focus if this committee is only on the **PhD** dissertation, not including the Masters nor other doctoral level dissertations/theses. Some members expressed concern at the implications of such definitions, R. Klein made it clear that there is no intention to get rid of the dissertation, it’s more about defining what it used to be and into what it has evolved with an eye to more flexibility.

ACTION: A. Kirk will send the committee’s cover letter and discussion paper to Graduate Coordinators with instruction to provide feedback to R. Klein. A date and format for further discussion will be established.

FC 16.17.34 Other Business

None

FC 16.17.35 Next meeting –Tuesday January 24, 2016 in the University Hall, MacDonald Building

The meeting adjourned at 12:54p.m.

J. Michael Lee, Chair

A. Kirk, Recording Secretary