

**Graduate Student Association UW**

# **Council**

**Meeting Minutes**

**February 2, 2022**

**Primary Meeting**

Date: February 2, 2022

Time: 4:00 P.M. to 7:00 P.M.

Place: Virtual

**Council Speaker:** Tyler B. Hampton

**Minutes Taker:** Mavjot Kaur



**MEETING ATTENDENCE**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position/Faculty</b>	<b>Attendance*</b>
Tyler Hampton	Council Speaker	P
Matthew Gerrits	Arts - Master of Public Service (MPS)	P
Rabia Ahmed	Arts - Master of Digital Experience Innovation (MDEI)	P
Jillian Adams	Arts - Accounting & Finance	P
Erica Swyers	Arts - Germanic & Slavic Studies	R
Cael Dobson	Arts - Philosophy	P
Nathalie Gadbois	Arts - French Studies	P
Chris Martin	Arts - English Language & Literature	P
Madeleine Pinard	Arts - Global Governance	P
Kennedy Westlake	Arts - Psychology	P
Danielle LaBrash	Arts - Political Science	P
Jessica Gill	Arts - Sociology	P
Sarah Galarneau	Arts - Fine Arts	P
Teghan Barton	Arts - History	P
Kevin White	Cross - Collaborative Water Program	P
Devansh Nagpal	Eng - Management Sciences	P
Alex Dalton	Eng - Master of Business, Entrepreneurship, & Technology (MBET)	P
Manh Kien Tran	Eng - Chemical Engineering	P
Cindy Yang	Eng - Electrical & Computer Engineering	P
Jinesh Shah	Eng - Mechanical & Mechatronics Engineering	P
Nastaran Mosavari	Eng - Civil & Environmental Engineering	P
Nargess Heydari Beni	Eng - Systems Design Engineering	P
Yusof Ghiasi	Enviro - Geography & Environmental Management (GEM)	A
Tia Driver	Enviro - School of Environment, Enterprise, & Development (SEED)	P
Misty Matthews-Roper	Enviro - School of Environment, Resources, & Sustainability (SERS)	P
Anju George	Enviro - School of Planning	P
Kalsha Diagarachchige De Silva	Health - Kinesiology	P
MK Stinson	Health - Recreation & Leisure Studies	P
Pam Hopwood	Health - Public Health Science	P
Karolina Kaminska	Health - Public Health Science	P
Asiya Jabeen	Science - Optometry and Vision Science (School of)	R
Antoine Hakim	Science - Pharmacy (School of)	P
Caleb Ryan	Science - Biology	P
Everett Patterson	Science - Physics and Astronomy	P

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Naima Samuel	Senator	
Onurcan Gokkaya	Senator	R
Natalie Isobel DeBloeme Barcellos	Director (Board)	P
Yashesh Dasari	Director (Board)	P
Ala Mokhtar	Director (Board)	R
Jessica Lee	Director (Board)	P
Elham Mohammadi	Director (Board)	P
Samira Mehrabi	Director (Board)	R
Yi Abby Wang	Director (Board)	P
Ruby Aigbotsua	Director (Board)	P
Zabeen Khamisa	President, Director ex-officio	P
Glaucia Melo	Vice-President (Administration)	P
Rita Cherkewski	Executive Manager	P

\*Attendance

P – Present , Po – Proxy, R – Regrets , A – Absent (no regrets)

**AGENDA**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Item</b>		<b>Length (min)</b>	<b>Action</b>
4:00 PM	<b>1</b>	<b>SPEAKER'S WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS</b>	2	
4:02 PM	<b>2</b>	<b>ATTENDANCE</b>	1	
4:03 PM	<b>3</b>	<b>DECLARATION OF INTERESTS</b>	1	
4:04 PM	<b>4</b>	<b>ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA</b>	1	For Approval
4:05 PM	<b>5</b>	<b>Update from the President</b>	10	For Information
4:15 PM	<b>6</b>	<b>Update from the Speaker - Council Speaker Recruitment, Q&amp;A</b>	10	For Information
4:25 PM	<b>7</b>	<b>Update from the Board - Board Recruitment Pitch</b>	10	For Information
4:35 PM	<b>8</b>	<b>Organize UW Update</b>	5	For Information
4:40 PM	<b>9</b>	<b>Presentation on GSA Philanthropy Fund - GSA Partnerships Coordinator Nicholas Palaschuk</b>	15	For Discussion
4:55 PM		<b>Break</b>	5	
5:00 PM	<b>10</b>	<b>Presentation on Graduate Student Handbook Pilot - Labour Coordinator Sophie</b>	20	For Discussion
5:20 PM	<b>11</b>	<b>Jeff Casello (UW AVP GSPA) presents on Supervisor Relationships</b>	20	For Discussion
5:40 PM	<b>12</b>	<b>Breakout Rooms - Graduate Studies, Supervisors, Handbook</b>	25	For Discussion
6:05 PM		<b>Break</b>	5	
6:10 PM	<b>13</b>	<b>Discussion of UW Return to Campus</b>	25	For Discussion
6:35 PM	<b>14</b>	<b>Confidential Session</b>	25	For Discussion
7:00 PM		<b>ADJOURNMENT</b>		

**MINUTES**

**1. Speaker’s Welcome and Opening Remarks 04:05pm**

*Hampton takes the chair and calls the meeting to order at 04:05pm.*

**2. ATTENDANCE 04:06pm**

**3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS 04:06pm**

*Hampton declares a conflict of interest as he has served as Board of Directors. He is also the VP Communications and Council Speaker. During the discussion, Hampton will clear repeatedly what capacity he is in whenever he has a say.*

**4. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA 04:07pm**

*Motion to approve the agenda. Approved unanimously*

**5. Update from the President 04:10pm**

*GSA-UW President informed about their resignation as President and CEO of GSA. Zabeen mentioned that there are many reasons which led to this decision. Zabeen joined GSA in 2014 and has been part of GSA in different capacities. The main reason to hire them as GSA staff was to reorganize the organization to allow more directness in advocacy and equity at all organization levels. Zabeen added that the confidential session would discuss how it impacts the council.*

*Zabeen praised the operational team at all levels for helping in growth of the organization and student engagement. Zabeen has been honored to be part of the process and contribute to the process which has led to Council growth and increased voice importance in terms of advocacy. Zabeen appreciated the continuous engagement of the Council irrespective of the COVID-19, being virtual and other fluctuations. It was an honor to work with such forward thinking organization in terms of council and the voices and imaginations the council has. Zabeen emphasized the imagination part because every role they had in the organization did not exist before, be it event coordination, social media, Vice Presidents and many more. This imagination and support could create capacity in the student body and create projects to community.*

*Zabeen updated that there is an emergency succession plan through which they were appointed. The same process would be presented in the board meeting later that month. Zabeen mentioned that the work plan created by this team and operational team was approved by the board. Irrespectively of who becomes the next GSA-UW President, the staff had committed to follow the plan. The work plan is essential for consistency of the organization and not necessarily person in the role of President. The benefit of having two VPs is when someone leaves the President role, it is not risky for the organization.*

*Zabeen updated that GSRC approved 2% increase in minimum PhD funding, and it would go to Provost for final approval. Zabeen also updated that Ombuds motion has been approved by the GSA and the informal timeline is there is going to be a process by Fall 2022. As an organization, our ability is to act and the university’s response to our request has had been met with great respect and openness. Zabeen mentioned that one of the challenges of dealing with burnouts how the organization is treated by the students and how the organization has had to defend their work. The council consistency and growing engagement had helped very much.*

**6. Update from the Speaker**

**04:20pm**

*The Council Speaker mentioned that many of the accomplishments listed by the President started through initiative by the council. The Ombuds started in Fall 2020. Since then, the organization had many council speakers, presidents, and vice-presidents, but these accomplishments have been carried on and they will continue to be carried on. Referring to President's comment on creativity and imagination, Council Speaker mentioned that in March 2020, it was the imagination that led to an increase of 2% in minimum funding increase, when the Council voted down the funding and asked for an increase. Similarly, Housing research project is another obstacle which stemmed from the feedback that housing takes the largest portion of the funding as well as getting a housing is a challenge. A new channel in the council slack has been created to talk about housing issue.*

**- Council Speaker Recruitment, Q&A**

*The Council Speaker outlined the appointment of next Council Speaker. He highlighted the process of application which is due by March 4, 2022. The application and job description are available on GSA-UW website. In March, applications will be reviewed, and interviews would be held by Council Executive Committee. The CEC members who had their terms expiring in March are staying to take the interviews. On April 6, 2022, council meeting, the Council will vote on the Speaker appointment. The May 2022 meeting would be chaired by the next Speaker and new CEC will be appointed. The May meeting would be online and next speaker would inform regarding the venue of the meeting whether online or in-person or hybrid.*

*The Council Speaker mentioned that honorarium is \$800 per month, estimated hours is 25hours per month. The contract duration is May1, 2022 to April 20223. The key responsibilities are Council Administration, Council Performance, Council Relations. This position is high level leadership role where the communication & coordination in form of feedback between the board, the executive team and the council is to be maintained. He added that an information session might be held if the there are enough people to attend the session.*

**7. Update from the Board**

**04:28pm**

**- Board Recruitment Pitch**

*Yashesh (Deputy Board Chair) shared an update from the chair. He informed about the AGM 2022. The meeting would be held online on April 13, 2022, at 4pm. In the AGM-2022, GSA-UW Board of Directors Elections would be held. He mentioned that there are 3 vacant seats, and the nomination process would start in March 2022. He highlighted about the functions of the board and encouraged the interested council members in nominating themselves. Responsibilities of the Board are overseeing the corporate interest of the GSA and help the organization in strategic planning and decision making. He shared that information regarding the process of elections are on the GSA-UW website.*

*The Council Speaker mentioned that there are many councilors who are interested in the role of director. Though the director contributes to the corporate interests of the GSA, council and directors contribute equally but in different capacities. There would be update in the March meeting about the nomination period.*

**8. Organize UW Update**

**04:31pm**

*The OrganizeUW Representative shared about the ongoing drive for the formation of Union of graduate student workers (TAs and RAs), as well as sessional instructors. The Union provides*

*unique legal protection for workers which cannot be covered by GSA. OUW is supported by CUPE. The CUPE was chosen because of its long-standing expertise in the academic sector and the presence among universities across the country. UW is one of the last schools without a union for graduate student workers.*

*The OUW Representative mentioned about safety on campus in a pandemic. The University Administration released a survey to UW employees to collect feedback on in-person return on January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Many TA and RA workers did not receive this email and could not participate in consultation. Most university employees were not adequately consulted on a safe return. She added that administration decided to in-person return without any clarity on various questions:*

- *Are workers being provided with adequate PPE?*
- *Is rapid testing accessible?*
- *Have infrastructure updates taken place?*
- *Do workers have autonomy to consult with each other & their students?*
- *Is meaningful consultation taking place? How is feedback disseminated?*

*Workers should decide what 'safe return' to campus is for them. She recommended to look at documents, CUPE's to safety protocols, Faculty Association's list of demands, Student body Open Letter to Water Administration and Demand for 'Compassionate Communication' from UW Staff Association.*

*She concluded by asking for support and to create awareness regarding ongoing drive for the formation of Union of graduate student workers (TAs and RAs), as well as sessional instructors.*

**9. Presentation on GSA Philanthropy Fund - GSA Partnerships Coordinator Nicholas Palaschuk**  
**04:37pm**

*UW-GSA Partnerships Coordinator presented about Philanthropy Fund Initiative Nominations & upcoming partnership development opportunities. He mentioned about the survey conducted in December 2021 by GSA, about democratic nomination process for choosing organizations in the region of Waterloo for Philanthropy Fund Initiative. After collecting responses for 2 months, GSA compiled the list of finalized organizations who are going to be voted on by the Council with intent to choose four organizations. These four organizations would receive the Philanthropy Fund worth \$1000 to acknowledge their philanthropic contributions to the area.*

*He shared information about Philanthropy Fund Initiative that it was dedicated to engage off-campus community organizations throughout Waterloo who align with the political positions of the GSA to create new opportunities and services to support graduate student experience as well as support improvements in the welfare of the broader community. He informed that the board committed to support four organizations this year than three last year.*

*He highlighted the four political positions,*

- *Political position 1: Ensuring ethical and equitable academic, employment, and social policies for UWaterloo Graduate Students.*
- *Political position 2: Mitigating barriers to pursuing graduate education in Ontario*
- *Political position 3: Encouraging the University of Waterloo and wider Region of Waterloo community to be leaders in sustainability*
- *Political position: Supporting student mental wellness*

*The Last year's Recipient for the award were,*

- *Social Development Centre Waterloo Region (aligned with Political position 1)*
- *Wisahkotewnowak Indigenous Garden Collective (aligned with Political position 3)*
- *Sexual Assault Support Centre (aligned with Political position 4)*

*He listed the nominees for GSA Philanthropy Fund 2021-22. He mentioned that the voting period is open for the February month and provided the link for the same. The results would be declared in March.*

*UW-GSA Partnerships Coordinator shared the information regarding the upcoming events. The next installment of #PoliticsToday Series would be held on February 16, in which there would be conversation with SASC. Other installments of this series are in the scheduling process. These include conversation with Kitchener & Waterloo Mayors and Waterloo Indigenous Garden Collective. Another Series, #MarchYourCareer, would be focusing on providing graduate students to engage and learn for industry professionals on building career which is scheduled in March. The GSA in collaboration with Waterloo Writing Centre are working on developing programs for Graduate BIPOC students, which would be held in May.*

*The Councillor of History asked about the #BuildYourCareer Series workshop with Chris Cornthwaite, whether the workshop is for STEM-focused graduate students or Arts and Humanities have representation as well. UW-GSA Partnerships Coordinator clarified that this workshop would focus building a non-academic career with academic focused degrees and is more about 'How tos' like resume writing and networking.*

#### **10. Presentation on Graduate Student Handbook Pilot - Labour Coordinator Sophie 05:04pm**

*Labour Coordinator presented on University of Waterloo PhD Handbook. The context of the Handbook was inspired by GSA Councillor role, dialogue with student body about working conditions, emergence of prominent and repetitive themes, and wide application of social and natural science trans-discipline. The motivation behind this Handbook has been the challenges faced by the SERS PhD students as they do not receive sufficient departmental support, program direction and skills training. To solve these issues this handbook was created which will document the common obstacles, best practices, and success through student collaboration.*

*Labour Coordinator shared overview of the consultation process. The consultation took place for 5 months. 15 students, representing 7 distinct cohorts, were consulted. She emphasized that this was a completely voluntary initiative which took place during a pandemic. The recent graduates were also part of these cohort groups which shows the passion students have for the department and the want for a positive change. She mentioned that the challenges were categorized into key areas where PhD students need more support, and these key areas were represented in the handbook as sections and sub sections.*

*She highlighted the consultation findings. The core issue was significant discrepancy between what department believes is sufficient information and students express they need to excel.*

- *Course Requirements: There are two required courses in the PhD program. According to the focus groups, these courses do not fillip students with skills and understanding they need for program success.*
- *Major Milestones: There is lack of information and the committee members often have different*



*expectations in terms of research proposal format which makes it difficult to quantify performance and success in these milestones.*

- *Significant Research Steps: There is minimum support. In case of ethics application which is required to conduct the research, the students are not guided, and they struggle through the whole process on their own.*
- *Existing Support Systems: The main finding is that existing supports are inefficient and repetitive.*
- *Departmental Guidance: Departmental Guidance has significant discrepancies. There are many tools at student's disposal in the program, but they are not providing necessary services for students to succeed.*

*She mentioned about the Handbook Sections. Through focus group, four sections were identified as significant.*

- *Orientation: This would cover the organizational structure of the institution, including departmental institution and information regarding Graduate representatives, dGSAs and GSA. This orientation section would also cover research process which would emphasize on responsibilities of transitioning from masters or industry.*
- *Timeline: This section would identify objectives for each year for academic advancement as well as personal & professional development.*
- *Funding: This would not only cover the funding options available internally, externally or for international students but funding management as well.*
- *Problem Solving: This would be focusing on articulating and setting expectations and accountability systems for students as well as for committee.*

*She shared the next steps in this process. The concept of Handbook was presented to the department chair and then to the Department's Graduate Research Committee. This handbook was presented to the SEED department who is in the process of implementing our methodology in their department. The SRES department had endorsed the handbook and dedicated the resources to have them in students' hands in September 2022.*

*She listed the expected outcomes. The first is to have a set of centralised living documents which would provide students with information in one place and increase department accountability for supplying information. There are some extended benefits, including curriculum improvement, intra-departmental communication and conservation of resources, time & energy.*

*She laid the comprehensive methodology for wider implementation. She mentioned the reason for sharing this concept with GSA. It would be more efficient to bring it to GSA rather than every department mobilize in isolation. It would also balance the power.*

*She listed some questions for councillors to ask their constituents for feedback.*

- *Do your constituents feel they have the resources/ supports they require to excel in their graduate studies at UWaterloo?*
- *Does your department offer a centralized resource such as a program handbook? If not, what are the primary resources your constituents use for support? How accessible are they?*
- *Would a centralized resource (handbook) improve departmental communication of expectations and university resources to your constituents?*
- *Would you be supportive of the GSA formalizing this resource at the faculty level, with flexibility for departmental differences?*

*The GSA President asked if they could facilitate in reviewing of the handbooks already created by some departments. Jessica replied that they would be reviewing handbooks from other universities and would consider the handbooks already created as this would guide them in the process.*

*The Councillor of Physics asked whether it would work at departmental level or faculty level. Jessica replied that everything which is currently mobilizing is up for change and there would be flexibility as all departments under a faculty might not have same things.*

#### **11. Jeff Casello (UW AVP GSPA) presents on Supervisor Relationships**

**05:24pm**

*Dr. Casello presented on Supervisor Relationships. He highlighted the basics of supervision at Waterloo. The students' experience with their supervisor(s) influences students' overall satisfaction with their program and career preparation. There is a distribution of supervisory styles and performances. There are some supervisors with recognition awards from the university or faculty while others benefit from training. Supervisory activities are important in a faculty member's overall evaluation. It is part of the teaching expectations for the faculty members. These supervisory activities are reported as part of their performance which directly influence their compensation. It is also considered in evaluation of the faculty member at times of tenure and promotion. This evaluation method is currently focused on the quantity of supervision (number of students) instead of quality of supervision.*

*Dr. Casello mentioned about how the university prepare the supervisors to be successful and what are the expectations set for them. The document 'Guide for Graduate Research Supervision' highlights what expectations are for supervisor, students, and those who administer graduate programs. The academic calendar had also been updated. This calendar focuses on the key elements of the 'Guide for Graduate Research Supervision'. He added that this calendar is contractual binding between the students and the university. To supervise PhD students solely, the faculty members must obtain 'Approved Doctoral Dissertation Supervisor (ADDS) status. This process ensures that faculty member is prepared to be a successful supervisor and if they do not meet the criteria their ADDS status is revoked. The University had established a need for recurring and constructive feedback and established the expectations of student, supervisors, and the university when supervisory relationships become unproductive.*

*Dr. Casello shared information regarding what the university is doing to monitor and improve the quality of graduate student supervision. The GSPA and Centre for Teaching Excellence offer a series of workshops which focuses on the policy framework, recruiting students, establishing common expectations between graduate students and their supervisors, research ethics and supporting graduate students' professional trajectories. GSPA has had been leading a taskforce for a couple of years. The draft was prepared using rich data collected from various levels of authorities and students, but the work was interrupted due to pandemic. Subsequently, the taskforce recognized that its work had not been adequately informed by a diversity and inclusion lens. Therefore, there has had been no decision made whether to disseminate the existing draft and later update it the diversity angle or not disseminate anything.*

*Dr. Casello mentioned about the best practices in graduate student supervision according to university's perception and the steps taken by them to achieve those outcomes.*

- *Expectation setting: what the student's and supervisor's long term goals are in the relationship and what the 'operational expectations' are.*
- *Training and recognition: how the university is motivating the faculty to train to be successful*

*supervisors and how they are recognizing the excellence in the supervisors.*

- *Evaluation: There should be a way to determine the quality of graduate student supervision which involves graduate students' feedback.*
- *Dispute resolution: Clear pathways should be established for graduate program coordinators, graduate officers, and associate deans to act when certain dispute related to supervisory relationships is brought forth to them as they are unaware that it is their job to do so.*
- *Enhanced roles of committees: Engagement with committees puts through supervisors and others to peer scrutiny which results in better outcomes as it protects the students & their interests.*

*Jessica shared her personal experience of ill-treatment by a supervisor due to which she had to restart her PhD again in third year. She mentioned about her going to authorities at different levels for justice but there had been no progress. Dr. Casello showed his concern and ask Jessica to have a conversation regarding the same after the meeting. He added that the students have an agency to support them if any issues with the supervisor or construct of the committee. This agency would support the student financially while they are transitioning through the process. Dr. Casello assured that the ombudsperson would have the role of pointing out the authorities if their system failed in providing students with justice when it comes to such issues. GSA-UW President asked about how the students navigate to give their feedback and what are the sources of feedback to make recommendations mentioned in the document presented by him. Dr. Casello clarified that they conducted surveys and talked to current students and alumni as well regarding the problems faced by them. In terms of recommendations mentioned in the document, the attributes in the letter for excellency in graduate student supervision were considered.*

*The Councillor of Public Service asked whether there is a certain timeline for this evaluation to be implemented as supervisory is one of the criteria for teaching evaluation by the departmental chair. Dr. Casello replied that departmental chair generally looks at the quantity of supervisory and publications and there is a need to update the evaluation process. He added that encouraging training, recognizing excellence, and then building evaluation matrix would be a better approach.*

## **12. Breakout Rooms - Graduate Studies, Supervisors, Handbook**

**06:03pm**

*Speaker listed the questions that were to be discussed in the breakout rooms amongst councillors.*

*The questions for the councillors were:*

- *Do your constituents feel they have the resources/ supports they require to excel in their graduate studies at UWaterloo?*
- *Does your department offer a centralized resource such as a program handbook? If not, what are the primary resources your constituents use for support? How accessible are they?*
- *Would a centralized resource (handbook) improve departmental communication of expectations and university resources to your constituents?*
- *Would you be supportive of the GSA formalizing this resource at the faculty level, with flexibility for departmental differences?*

*The Councillors were separated into different breakout rooms to discuss the graduate funding as Councillors.*

### **Breakout Group 1**

- *There is lack of consequences for faculty members that commit infractions. No active*

*conversations taking place. There is a call for more transparency.*

- *The departments that have handbooks are History, Biology, Pharmacy, Psychology.*

### **Breakout Group 2**

- *There is not enough information to excel, and quality information is mostly communicated orally. Students are just getting by and not excelling.*
- *There is no central document in Physics department and communication was hampered during Covid. As per English, Physics and other departments, the biggest mode of communication is oral. Some departments have websites/links which are not easy to find.*
- *A centralised handbook would be helpful. There could be a centralised template and handbooks can be department level.*
- *Consensus is that a departmental level resource is most valuable.*

### **Breakout Group 3**

- *Many constituents feel they don't have all the resources/supports they need. Especially transparency of information, program requirements, accessibility of resources. Constituents reporting difficulties with accessing and getting assistance from the accessibility services/office*
- *Another piece of pertinent information that constituents wish they were aware of sooner is realistic timeframe to complete the program (5 years versus 4), and clawback of funding if a student gets OGS, the existence of the GSA.*
- *Regarding the availability of program handbook-*
  - *Kin/Health Sci: centralized resource on Learn called Kin Grad Community - not quite a handbook, but information on milestones and professional development seminars (networking, CVs, post docs).*
  - *Accounting: no handbook, constituents email grad coordinator with questions (with limited success in getting the correct answer)*
  - *Fine Arts: has a handbook provided upon acceptance to program. Constituents provided feedback to program admin that more transparency was needed regarding funding, and handbook is being updated for this.*
  - *MME: no handbook, constituents access the MME section of UW website and contact grad coordinator with questions (with limited success in getting the correct answer)*
- *Centralized resource would be helpful but would need to be very specific to each department.*
- *Department level handbook would be ideal because of how different two departments are within one faculty. Alternatively, a faculty-level introduction then specific chapters for department might be considered. Student involvement is important in this process as this would ensure accuracy of information.*

### **Breakout Group 4**

- *The current scenario of online learning limits the students to seek assistance in finding resources which would have been easier to find through casual conversations if the learning method was in-person. Some students expressed concerns with confusion about internal processes and lack of clear documentation.*
- *Health Sciences has a handbook but most department do not have one. Admin coordinators are the primary source for the students. The department websites are legitimate sources, but they are not updated frequently.*
- *A standardized handbook could improve the existing handbooks. It is also important to update these handbooks are updated frequently. The access to the handbook will reduce the repetitive questions the administration might receive from students.*

- *The support in formalising this resource would be extended if the correct information is provided in the handbook and these handbooks are specified to the needs of the students at the department level. A generic handbook would be of no use. This would further help in comparing the processed between the departments in same faculty and highlight areas of improvements.*
- *In reference to Dr. Casello's presentation, what the current approach is if the supervisor changes. Can the millstones be retained from previous work and modify research with new supervisor?*
- *Some annual reports do not have information regarding the procedure to follow, if students are dissatisfied with their professor. This information might be included in the annual reports are they are mandatory.*
- *It is appreciated that there is a task force that explores the challenges faced by graduate students. However, there is a need for more resources and support for students when they experience supervisor challenges.*

### **Breakout Group 5**

- *Regarding the availability of resources/supports to excel:*
  - *Philosophy: feel unprepared/unsupported*
  - *Chemical Engineering: no issues in terms of research and TAships; eagerness to get back to in-person but lap-space is limited.*
  - *Geography: concerns regarding information given by the university is unclear, especially whether they pertain to international students.*
- *Regarding availability of a centralised resource/handbook:*
  - *Philosophy: availability is quite less*
  - *Chemical Engineering: has an accessible document but it is very long. The document deals with safety and research but no information regarding funding.*
  - *Geography: handbook available but unclear and outdated. The mandatory courses change every year, and the handbook is not updated on time.*
- *Regarding whether availability of centralised resource/handbook improve communication of expectations and university resources:*
  - *Chemical Engineering: A centralised handbook would help in terms of time and resources in addition to department-specific handbooks.*
  - *Geography: Availability of handbooks might increase the communication gap as the department would ask the students to refer to the handbook if they would go to the department for questions. This is more problematic for international students.*
  - *Philosophy: due to difference in departments and faculties, a department specific handbook is needed but a centralised one for funding and scholarship might be useful.*
- *The handbook could help with accountability. It needs to be concise. Therefore, A centralised handbook with more concise department level documents would work.*

### **Breakout Group 6**

- *Regarding the availability of resources/supports to excel:*
  - *The fact that information for graduate students comes from other graduate students (especially when new), has been complicated by the online nature of COVID. Another agreed with this point, noting that the handbook would help alleviate this. Another noted that they have also had trouble connecting with a large number of other grad students, especially incoming cohorts.*
  - *Knowledge about traditional DGSA activities (elections, other events) may be atrophying. Discord has been a lifesaver, notes another. In some cases, students weren't on email lists.*
  - *One member noted that being pushed back into classrooms for a coursework masters has been*

*stressful for constituents. Asked if people TA'ing have gripes. Another member said that it has felt safe so far. Other notes that in lab environments, occupancy rates are relevant, in fall, labs were reduced occupancy or more sections were offered. Another concurs that it is currently unclear.*

- *Regarding availability of a centralised resource/handbook:*
  - *A member noted that there is already a DGSA-level handbook. Another concurred but only at the MA level, not PhD, and is incomplete, very administrative/process oriented. Another noted there was not one in theirs. Existence of handbooks is something available but not publicized, shared informally (in one case).*
  - *Another noted conflicting handbook-website information. Can be wide confusion on certain administrative details that emanate from the inconsistency. Another member who has both website and handbooks as sources of authority concurred that the confusion also exists in their case. Says that they didn't know who to ask about general questions.*
  - *A member noted that centralized and maintained calendars on a departmental level or a faculty level would be beneficial. Another member noted that these projects can be difficult to maintain, especially with staff continuity issues. Another noted that program size is a consideration.*
- *Regarding whether availability of centralised resource/handbook improve communication of expectations and university resources:*
  - *One member: would be great to have for common milestones. The customization on faculty or departmental levels might make it difficult, and the nuance is very important. On a departmental level, noting a resource like conferences that people could go to is an option.*
  - *If there is a centralized handbook, general non-procedural elements are more important, more cultural things like supervisor relationship is more important on a campus-wide level due to the fact that those are the more common experiences than rules and administrative. Responsibilities of supervisors and students are also themes that fit in this category. Another member endorsed a universal handbook. Also useful, explanations of important skills to learn, differences from undergrad also useful, says someone else. Urges some caution about portraying certain things as “universal”, cites hours spent reading per year. Another member though a standard weekly schedule might be another area that could be a potential minefield.*
  - *The handbook should also address health insurance and with more clarity.*
  - *Information regarding claiming of partial refunds for partially completed terms at the end of dissertation/thesis if available, would be useful.*
  - *Multiple models of what a successful graduate students is can be included in centralized handbook.*

### **13. Discussion of UW Return to Campus**

Due to time constraints, this discussion was delayed. The Council Speaker provided a brief update on advocacy relating to the return to campus. Earlier this day, the UW President participated in the President's forum and provided answers to many of the same questions that councillors had asked.

### **14. Confidential Session**

**06:35pm**

### **Adjournment**

**7:30pm**