

Resolution concerning the new “Time to Completion” policy in the School of Graduate Studies

Respectfully submitted to the Agenda Committee by Mark Jones, Faculty Senator for Arts and Science

Background: In approving the “Governing Framework for Graduate Studies” (http://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/senate/agendasminutes/052009/AppEc_from_May20_09.pdf) (May 2009), Senate tasked the Graduate Studies Executive Council (GSEC) with “functions” including “Review[ing] and revis[ing] departmental and faculty regulations pertaining to graduate studies in their areas, in matters related but not limited to [. . .] progress through the graduate degrees, completion of degree requirements, [and] appeals of graduate students” (p. 5).

Resolution: In light of recent media announcements¹ concerning the GSEC’s decision to shorten Time-to-Completion requirements for graduate programs, be it resolved that the School of Graduate Studies (SGS) and GSEC be reminded by Senate:

(i) that the “Governing Framework for Graduate Studies” explicitly stipulates that “Decisions made by GSEC are either recommended or provided as information to Senate and Senate subcommittees as required by SGS or university regulations, and to the Faculty Graduate Councils/Committees” (p. 6), and that the GSEC has neither informed Senate of nor recommended to Senate its recent decision to shorten Time-to-Completion requirements;

(ii) that in the legal opinion provided by Justice Frank Iacobucci at the request of Principal Woolf and on behalf of the Board of Trustees,² “Senate’s delegation of the exercise of its authority to others within the University does not, as a matter of law, derogate from the Senate’s authority over academic matters as set out in the Royal Charter. The Senate retains the legal authority to require that **any decision** falling within the Senate’s jurisdiction be brought back to the Senate for consideration and approval” (pp. 10-11, emphasis added);

(iii) that the “Purpose and Functions of Senate”

¹ See “Revised policy aims to support graduate student progress,” *Queen’s News Centre*, 15 March 2013, <http://www.queensu.ca/news/articles/revised-policy-aims-support-graduate-student-progress>. For critiques, see Meaghan Frauts, “Queen’s plan to change its graduate policy needs more study: Why lowering times-to-completion will hurt women grad students,” *University Affairs*, 27 March 2013, <http://www.universityaffairs.ca/queens-plan-to-change-its-graduate-policy-needs-more-study.aspx>, and other pieces collected on the “Open Letter to Principal Woolf” website, <http://openletterwoolf.wordpress.com/>.

² Justice Frank Iacobucci, Opinion “Re: The Senate’s Role in Queen’s University Governance,” 12 November 2012, <http://senatefacultycaucus.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/iacobucciopinion.pdf>.

<http://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/senate/functions.html>) affirms that “Under the jurisdiction of the Royal Charter of 1841, Senate determines all matters of an academic character that affect the University as a whole, and is concerned with all matters that affect the general welfare of the University and its constituents”; and therefore

(iv) that even though Senate has delegated authority to the SGS and GSEC in the “Governing Framework for Graduate Studies,” Senate retains ultimate authority over all matters of an academic character and can at its sole discretion either rescind the authority it has delegated to the SGS and GSEC or override particular actions it judges to be academically unwise or harmful to the institution or its members.

**Motion for Senate
April 30, 2013**

Moved by Senator Bridges, seconded by Senator Scribner:

That Senate urge the Graduate Studies Executive Council (GSEC) to strike a broadly based Task Force to seek practical ways to facilitate timely completion that are (a) sensitive to disciplinary differences, (b) consistent with academic quality, (c) consistent with equity, (d) cognizant of all factors that affect graduate student completion times, and (e) based on real consultation with all affected parties, in particular graduate students and graduate supervisors; that it request the Task Force to report back to Senate by November 2013; and that it urge the GSEC to rescind or suspend its decision to shorten Time-to-Completion limits until such time as this Task Force can complete these objectives and report back.