

Post-Presentation Discussion  
May 8, 2020  
1:30-3pm

**PGSC Action Items:**

**ACTION ITEM:** Send John copy of current TA collective agreement asap.

**ACTION ITEM:** Let GEC know if we want paper or electronic copies of handbook or both.

**ACTION ITEM:** If electronic, find and send examples of what we want final product to look like.

**ACTION ITEM:** Directly make the stylistic changes in the handbook

**ACTION ITEM:** Provide any additional insight on how to roll out the handbook in departmental meetings with consideration to the 'hot topic' item of guaranteed funding and supervisor responsibilities.

**GEC Action Items:**

**ACTION ITEM:** Add physical tabs to paper copies of handbooks.

**ACTION ITEM:** Determine if language and policy around TAs can be added to handbook

**TENTATIVE PLAN OF ACTION:** Concern about TA component, too little time to incorporate the changes before the meeting (Tuesday) but may need more time. Come Monday, M will shoot a line to GEC to make TA component the main issue. And make it a discussion item for May and then based on that resolution will have a new handbook for June meeting.

**Post-Presentation Discussion:**

**M&J:** To clarify dept. typically has not kept track of old versions because every version is a better version. Only component that depends on year you entered the program is the course requirement section, which is based on the calendar for the year you entered the program.

But where to find calendar version of your course requirements could be discussed and added to the handbook. M has emailed GARO about course calendar, could have the course requirements indexed in the calendar for each year.

Karen keeps copies of past handbooks

Have to deliberate with GEC whether updates regarding TAs is within jurisdiction of handbook. Question of whether there should be any content about TAs at all, as own unionized form of labor which opens up opp. for policy conflict.

**ACTION ITEM:** send John copy of current TA collective agreement

Consulting with FGS to see if can speak to anything TA related in handbook

- If dept. habits are not in keeping with union, then have to talk to our union about this
- If can include TA stuff in handbook, then conversation to be had about where and how much content we include

**PGSC:** Depts. at other Universities have funding tied to TAships which is why we seek clarification around this

**M&J:** Harrassment and overworking TAs goes through GEC and grad advisor first before union usually, so handbook should have some language or links to some of this stuff surrounding TAships and allocation of TAships

But grad advisor and graduate sec have nothing to do with allocation of TAships.

Annette is singlehandedly responsible so GEC never had a voice when it came to policy or process or grievance.

Faculty supervisors are not required to sign off or anything on TAships.

FGS is a bit afraid of crossing that line, e.g., cannot offer awards based on research assistantships or TAships as funding is kept very separate, in a different pool

More process and information around TAships and allocation is an actionable item

Agreement around information to include like who to consult with, who is in charge of what, what is the process of resolving things (e.g., grad advisor → union rep → union itself).

Department is exceptionally large and the process of allocation is very difficult. Annette has a challenging job. But want to walk this path with sensitivity to person who has worked really hard to make a process work for her.

Acknowledgement of graduate frustration with the lack of transparency in this process, and have found that these same kinds of issues span across departments and faculties, looking into common solutions that could be deployed across departments

Looking into what can be done to support Annette --- to improve this process, dynamical system.

**PGSC:** Any other questions about presentation?

**M&J:** If PGSC wants stylistic changes made to handbook, the preferred means is to just do it ourselves

**Q:** Do we want Paperless or electronic version of Handbook? We could have a website/online version. With proper tabs in a website environment.

**PGSC ACTION ITEM:** Let GEC know if we want paper or electronic or both.

**PGSC:** Initial comments, easier to go to search bar and find information. Electronic option better than print. Prefer website pages for each section.

**PGSC ACTION ITEM:** Find examples for what we want final product to look like.

**PGSC:** Also feel it is important to have physical document

**M&J:** Would require help from Wendy Davies so need to know in advance what is needed.

Important for PGSC to impress upon new students the importance of this document.

Every May, Grad Advisor gives department update on what new dept. looks like (e.g., incoming students, etc.).

Could also bring handbook to attention at orientation event.

**PGSC:** Bre & Lauren are also planning an orientation event.

**M&J:** Update on timeline and plan around minimum funding model

Debate happening around hot topic of shared responsibilities of funding (with supervisor having new responsibilities in this, own set of criteria)

Jurisdiction issue with this, FGS says sounds like a great model BUT problem is making it an actionable item. GEC and grad advisor have no power in keeping track of research productivity and funding among faculty

Scenario: student x in year x applies for a program but their proposed professor is flagged through the system and so student x will not receive funding due to supervisor's poor performance. Student gets letter of acceptance offering no funding.

So if this person didn't get funding, and they found out everyone else did, dept. cannot disclaim supervisors poor performance to the student, so would have to point to handbook and say that some criteria was not met, but student is still being punished.

Or student chooses not to go to UVIC and enrollment goes down. This also affects the new funding. New model for funding is based on enrollment. Overall funding pool would go down.

**TLDR:** GEC enthusiastic about shared responsibility component of Handbook but in consult with FGS will not stand by it as stated because deemed unfair to new students who chose to come here. SO will have to re-draft the section on funding. This was the only way GEC was able to make supervisors accountable, and now can't really do it.

**PGSC:** the student should never receive a 0 funding offer. Still need to account for situation where supervisor might say they have funding to provide but then retract it.

**M&J Question for PGSC:** how would student feel if didn't have funding and everyone else did?

Admission letters are binding so we need better language around implementing mechanism around funding specific to incoming students.

Engineering, department has stipulation of guaranteed funding.

If department can't provide funding, money must materialize from somewhere. Advisor would have to provide it.

**PGSC:** In terms of recruitment and retention, knowledge of how departments operate at dif. institutions spreads, there's already an idea that if you come to UVIC they don't provide good funding support. So consideration of this funding problem and reputation goes beyond just our department and UVIC, knowledge of lack of funding is well known across institutions.

Grad students at UVic have lower TA payrate, higher cost of living, and low funding—all of which influences students decisions to come to UVIC.

**M&J:** Without piece around committed minimal funding, shared responsibility model falls apart. So this piece would need to be in place but it also represents a dramatic change. So what they are thinking is that they want to partition these issues. Debate and discussion around this model... so timeline for handbook might slow down.

Considering not putting handbook on table for May meeting.  
Andrea lots of good feedback on other sections of the handbook and us with other sections that haven't yet been targeted, and then looming issue of TAships

Plan to put on table discussion about committing to minimal funding model. Which will give opp. to square away a comprehensive major revision of the handbook whether for June or September meeting, then when it gets approved and passed it will stand as complete update.

**Question to PGSC from M&J:** Pull out hot topic to discuss it and put the handbook forward, or wait and hold off on whole document?

Faculty will only have a weekend to read over the handbook to provide feedback. Worry that the whole department in meeting will zone in on the hot-topic funding issue.

M&J ask PGSC about taking out the hot topic item about funding. And give them document overview presentation so that they have more time to simmer on this rather than jump on the hot topic item.

So much follows from shared responsibility model that if minimal commitment of funding issue is vital to it working then might be better to get it squared away

**PGSC:**

Funding is a major vulnerability for students. And other issues trickle down from that. As long as it's on the table and being addressed is key.

We want high-quality colleagues

Concern about it not being taken up again.

General trust in GEC to unfold the handbook as they see fit.

**M&J:** Minimal funding piece requires commitment and passion to bring it to the table.

Potential response from faculty will be that we have been able to provide students with funding in the past. They might also say, "why this change?"

Response: already seen early signs of reduction, covid debate, and concern about attractiveness and marketing of this program. We need minimal guaranteed funding. Even if it's not a material change (e.g., \$15,000 per year). Some consistency creates psychological comfort.

Release handbook and give them a month to simmer on it for the June meeting?

**PGSC ACTION ITEM:** if we think of anything, please add

**FINAL PLAN OF ACTION:** Concern about TA component, too little time to incorporate the changes before the meeting (Tuesday) but may need more time. Come Monday, M will shoot a line to GEC to make this the main issue – make a memo about the TA part. And make that a discussion item for May and then based on resolution have new handbook for June meeting.