

Council Meeting Minutes
February 13, (14:30-17:00)
Meeting 8 – Room 403 Thomson House

Council members

President Fernanda Soler Urzua, **VP Student-Life** Zahra Jalili, **Conference coordinator** Charlotte Sachs, **DISE Representative** Stephen Peters, **VP Diversity & Equity** rosalind hampton, **VP Academic** Moksha Serrano, **PGSS councillor** Cora-Lee Conway, **MATL Representative** Riley Drever, **New co-DISE Representative**, Marcia Malcom (Welcome!).

Regrets, **DISE student** Leron Lewis, **PGSS Councillor** Yana Konokhova, **ECP Representative** Steffi Mathes, **KPE Representative** Nora Macmillan, **VP Communication** Tom Fullerton, **MLISSA Representative** Rachel Legaspi.

1. Approval of the agenda of Feb 13th, 2013
 - a. Pending (no quorum)

2. Approval of minutes of Jan 28th, 2012
 - a. Pending (no quorum)

3. DISE representative – Stephen’s resignation
 - a. Stephen is going to UK for 2 months, thus he must resign. Before then, Stephen will fulfill his duties at: 1 department meeting, 1 GPD meeting, cyclical review.
 - b. Moksha & Stephen have planned a coffee hour (February 19) for grad students to organise what they want to talk about for the cyclical review. Grad students are only given 45 min. at Cyclical review (February 26, 16:00-16:45), so questions will have to be sent in before.
 - c. Introducing Marcia – will overlap with Stephen until March 6th. Should Stephen and Marcia share the seat, or should he resign and we appoint Marcia?
 - i. **Share seat!**
 - ii. Motion to appoint Marcia as co-DISE rep
 1. **Approved unanimously (Once quorum was reached at 16:40)**

4. Conference update
 - a. EGSS General Assembly to be held during the conference
 - i. Council **STRONGLY URGES** membership to register for and attend the conference.
 - b. Can each council member chair at least one session? Please!

5. March General Assembly
 - a. To take place at lunch on the first day of the conference: March 15th, 12:30-2:00pm, room 129.

- b. This is our only chance to make amendments to the constitution, so this is the time to do it. Motions can be sent until March 10th.
- c. Budget update: There is a surplus (\$2699), so allocation of these funds should be discussed during the GA. Ideas:
 - i. People have complained that the study space is not very agreeable or accessible – it needs some improvements.
 - ii. More money for Diversity & Equity – In online forum, you can only have access to 15 posts at a time (earlier posts are inaccessible). \$50/year for membership to more space (i.e. postings won't be deleted)
 - 1. It is a great space to keep and can only get better!
 - iii. More money to fellowships? Or travel awards?
- d. Translation of the constitution
 - i. Bid for members to translate the constitution
 - ii. We don't want to underpay, and we don't want to have to pay professional fees. Bid system with a minimum.
- e. We need to provide lunch
 - i. Should EGSS just provide that lunch that day? And conference attendees can have lunch there.
 - ii. Lunch in the auditorium, as a way to drive people to be at the GA?
 - iii. MJ is the one in charge of food for the conference, so she needs to be contacted. Conference meeting is tomorrow, so we can talk to MJ then.
- f. Let's start advertising now!
 - i. We can include this in the conference reminders. We can also make info pamphlets to distribute to members
 - ii. Tom – please advertise the GA on our website, Facebook & Twitter.

6. EGSS Elections 2013-2014 period

- a. Feb. 25-March 14 – nomination period (nomination forms are on the website).
- b. March 15-20 – campaigning, people can introduce themselves at GA.
- c. March 21-26 – elections
- d. **Chief Returning Officer** of elections; someone who is not running to oversee that the elections go well, people comply with the dates, coordinate with online voting, etc.
 - i. **Shared between Moksha & Robyn.**
- e. Do we have any plans to increase involvement from other departments?
 - i. Departmental reps can take a bigger role in that regard

7. Appointment of the Dean

- a. Dean's term is over this summer – is seeking reappointment
- b. Advisory committee for the appointment of the Dean – Tom & Mariusz
- c. Last meeting Feb. 4th, next is Feb. 27th – we need to give any input before then. Town Hall would be a good idea, but won't happen before Feb. 27th, so we should do an online survey (in 5 questions or less) to see what the membership thinks.

- d. Do we want to create a sub-committee? Who would like to be included on a list to talk about this with the current Advisory Committee?
 - i. Moksha, Charlotte & Fernanda (Fernanda will schedule the meeting)

8. VP Diversity & Equity report

- a. The mandates of all three motions included that they were to be shared widely beginning on January 28th, but none appeared on our website until January 30th. We should be careful when passing motions that if we do not see a mandate (re. deadlines to fulfill it or anything else) as realistic that we adjust the motion accordingly. Once a motion passes we are mandated to fulfill all of its clauses.
- b. The EGSS mandate regarding our endorsement of a YES vote in the DPS referendum was not met and this situation was more serious because the mandate was in fact contradicted.
 - i. The motion stated and the VP D&E articulated repeatedly in the meeting that the endorsement should appear on the website and that the link to the endorsement should be sent out over the listserv.
 - ii. Instead, the entire motion was shared both on the website and sent out over the listserv which was a campaign violation that could have had serious repercussions. Rosalind and Fernanda caught the error quickly and removed the motion from the website.
- c. Both the **Diversity and Equity Q&A's** that VP D&E prepared for the DISE website at DISE rep's suggestion (over the winter break) and the **anti-oppression statement** that EGSS proposed be made available for Faculty of Education course syllabi (at the end of the fall semester) have gained considerable attention.
 - i. **D&E at McGill Q&As:** VP D&E was contacted on Feb 1st by Geneviève Trudel, Outreach Liaison Partner (Faculty of Medicine Office of Admissions, Equity and Diversity) and asked if she could repost the document the VP D&E created for the DISE website, on their website (<http://www.mcgill.ca/medadmissions/eq-div>). VP D&E confirmed that the document could be re-posted on February 6th 2013;
 - i. **Anti-oppression statement:** While the Dean of Education would not support the statement being made available when it was brought to Faculty council, several individual professors expressed great interest in the statement. The issue was re-raised at the DISE departmental meeting (which the DISE rep attended), following which it was reported to the VP D&E by several people that the chair was interested in mandating professors to use the statement (or a revised version of it). VP D&E has serious concerns about this and has been working on another statement of position (See APPENDIX 1 for email correspondence)
 - 1. VP D&E will continue to work on a statement that encourages faculty members to explore ways in which the complexity of anti-oppression work at the university might be addressed;
 - 2. DISE Rep. will raise the issue at the next departmental meeting (Feb. 19th) and specify that EGSS council supports the removal of the terms "zero tolerance" and "hate speech" in any anti-oppression statement;
 - 3. DISE Rep. will share with DISE faculty that VP D&E is interested in being involved in any committee set up to explore these issues.

9. Motion to request to DISE Graduate Program Director for clarification of the Department's policy regarding the completion of comprehensive examinations (APPENDIX 2)
- a. Recap: Before Christmas, there was a letter of concern to be sent out (not on record) to notify students that they should be looking into doing comps before they start their third year. Words 'non-consequential' and 'letter of concern' were used when this action was decided upon in the DISE rep's presence. A letter has more recently been sent to PhD students threatening expulsion if this requirement is not met in aforementioned time limit. DISE rep, Stephen Peters, has also contacted Lise Winer regarding this issue (and rest of GPC) and there has been no response.
 - i. Bring this to Faculty Council? It might have to be reworked a bit, since not all departments have relevant programs. Also, Faculty Council might not care, and the DISE might feel that we did not give them the opportunity to address our concerns.
 - ii. The Department of Integrated Studies in Education has to deal with this. It's only going to get worse. Stephen doesn't think that this has been discussed enough at the GPC level, before it is brought to the department.
 - b. Revision of motion: **Approved**
 - c. **Motion approved unanimously**
10. HANDS request for funds
- a. Solidarity funds will be available very soon
11. EGSS Communications - to membership and Council
- a. The VP Academic brought up the fact that at the last meeting it was discussed that we be judicious about how many emails we send out to EGSS membership and wanted to know why there were some emails sent to all students that were not EGSS related. It was brought up that this needs to stop, as it goes against what's outlined in the constitution. It was explained that there has been a discussion between the President and the VP Communications regarding this matter, and that all messages that will be sent out to the membership will need to be pre-approved by the President. Also, in the event that time-sensitive issues cannot be sent out by the VP Communications, the President will send out messages.
 - b. Questions were asked about the e-mail egsscommunications@gmail.com, and who has access to that e-mail. It is currently a private e-mail of one of the councillors, and concerns were raised as to who could access that account in the event of an emergency or unforeseen circumstances. The membership may assume that it is an EGSS e-mail, and messages that need to be disseminated to the public may be withheld. If one were to use an e-mail, with the name EGSS attached, at least two members of council should have access to the e-mail, similar to, for example, the EGSS Conference e-mails.
 - c. **Motion** motivated by Moksha:
 - i. BIRT that, effective immediately, the egsscommunications@gmail.com email account be deleted;

- ii. BIFRT that EGSS council members not create email accounts associated with the EGSS name unless mandated to do so by council, and if so, that a minimum of 2 members have access to that account;
- iii. BIFRT that all communications sent to EGSS members be disseminated through the mail.mcgil.ca account.

1. Approved Unanimously

12. EGSS Travel Awards and Fellowships

- a. Update from MLISSA
 - i. They appreciate our help about being included in our awards, but they've decided to decline.
- b. 2013 Fellowships
 - i. Moksha would like to strike a sub-committee to discuss how it works, this subcommittee would be open to all EGSS members, similar to the constitution process.
 - ii. After going through the 2011 – 2012 process, along with feedback from faculty and students, applications need to be changed, description of criteria need to be re-written. This is a continuation of work that there was not sufficient time to complete last year.
 - iii. Information about the subcommittee will be sent to the VP Communication to send out to the membership.

13. PGSS Councillor Reports

- a. Updates to EGSS and Attendance at Meetings
 - i. Cora and Moksha attended the PSAC (policy committee of PGSS) where the issue of representation was discussed and the committee reached a consensus re: a proposal to council that will see an additional seat at council for EGSS bringing our total to 4 councillors. That said we need to actively mobilize to fill those seats as we only have 2 active councillors.

14. PGSS Council Representation

- a. Update on December 2012 Motion submitted to the PGSS
 - i. Proposal to reduce PGSS to around 80 members, since there are only usually 50-60 people in attendance
 - ii. EGSS has the largest number of members, proportional to PGSS entirety, so we need to keep our representation up
 - iii. Update to follow.

15. EGSS Council meetings for the remainder of the year

- a. "March meeting" on Mon., Feb. 25, 2:30-5:00 (Fernanda will send out a Doodle to confirm that sufficient council members will be in attendance)

Meeting adjourned at 17:10

APPENDIX 1

- VP D&E stated the following in an email to the DISE GPD on Feb. 3rd 2013:

...I'm actually really concerned about the impulse to attach [the anti-oppression statement] to punitive measures. As I said in faculty council, I'm REALLY not about administrative structures designed to impose external controls on people, especially in the form of disciplinary measures. The motivation behind the statement was always to create teaching and learning environments where there is a shared (internalized, not imposed) sense of responsibility for anti-oppressive discourse. I am actually really against profs being forced or mandated such that they "have to" put anything on their course outlines, and only ever suggested that the statement be made available.

[...] Through all of this further consideration I've realized that I'm actually really uncomfortable with the line "zero tolerance for hate speech" because in hindsight it is way too vague and superficial. "Zero tolerance" indeed suggests punitive consequences and "hate speech" is quite slippery. I can imagine, for example, that some students, especially those not used to their privilege being challenged, could perceive a critique of white supremacy as "anti-white hate speech", or a critique of Canada as a settler colony as "anti-Canadian hate speech". EGSS in fact has passed a mandate in solidarity with Indigenous rights and the Idle No More Movement and so clearly we support and encourage such critiques!

I think that it is really important that any statement rely less on "easy" statements like "zero tolerance for hate speech" and better reflect the complexity of anti-oppression work and the impulse behind the statement, which is to open up dialogue, not shut it down; to encourage people to respectfully have difficult conversations about power and identity and indeed to encourage critiques of oppressive power structures and systems.

APPENDIX 2

(Motion): Request to DISE Graduate Program Director for clarification of the Department's policy regarding the completion of comprehensive examinations

Submitted by rosalind hampton, VP Diversity & Equity (February 9, 2013; [\[and amended February 13th 2013\]](#))

Background & Rationale

Since the fall of 2011, the Graduate Program Director of the Department of Integrated Studies in Education (DISE) has informed PhD students on several occasions that they should complete their comprehensive exams (comps) before the beginning of their third year, unless they are enrolled in either the Language Acquisition or Gender and Women's Studies option or have "an exceptionally heavy course load." In order to encourage students to complete their comps within this time frame, a monetary award (called the ABDULs) was created for those who successfully do so.

It has been explained to students that this newly established deadline to complete comps and award for doing so, are intended to help them to move through their PhD program within a six-year time limit. Comps have been assessed as presenting something of a 'roadblock' for some students in the past, with some becoming stalled in their progress at this stage, delaying their research and dissertation.

The language used in relation to the completion of comps has varied, and in recent months has seemed to escalate in tone.

- The requirements of the PhD program in Educational Studies presented on the DISE website state that "EDEC 701 [Comprehensive Examination] is **normally** taken at the end of the second year for Ph.D. 2 program entrants and at the end of the third year for Ph.D. 1 entrants;"
- A document available on the DISE website dated October 2012 and titled "FAQ: What are the Roles of Members of the Doctoral Advisory Committee (DAC)?" explains comps as a **process** that is "**expected to be complete before the beginning of the student's third year in the program;**"
- In a February 1st, 2013 memo sent from the Graduate Program Director to several students enrolled in the PhD Educational Studies program (no option), the GPD stated that the "program **requires** that [students] pass [their] comprehensive exams by the end of [their] second year;"
- [On February 10th \(6 working days later\) the GPD sent several students in the PhD Educational Studies program \(no option\) another email, cc'd to their supervisors, reiterating the deadline by which they "need to" pass their comprehensive exams;](#) and finally,
- [Within the past two weeks](#) the GPD has [also](#) asserted that students entering the PhD program in Educational Studies (no option) during the fall 2011 semester and thereafter will be **expelled from the program** if they have not completed their comprehensive examinations by the end of their second year.

While appreciating the importance of supporting students toward the successful completion of their program, it should also be observed that all students are not equally situated in relation to how much time they can devote to their studies. (Particularly single) parents and students who work, for example, are likely to require more time than those who do not have children to care for or who do not need to work in order to financially support themselves or others. Especially in the absence of need-based funding, less privileged students can thus be understood as less likely to benefit from awards such as the ABDULs that build on pre-existing privileges. It is difficult to imagine that it is the DISE's intention to further disadvantage these students with deadlines so rigid that they are bound to threats of expulsion from a PhD program. Furthermore, regardless of privilege, a PhD program is a highly stressful and demanding journey and it is not uncommon for students to change supervisors and programs of study for any

number of reasons as they learn and grow.

Motion- passed unanimously

Whereas the mission of the EGSS includes a commitment to augmenting the graduate student experience and working with an anti-oppression framework¹;

Whereas the EGSS represents the interests of more than three hundred graduate students studying in DISE, including 120 doctoral students², “in all matters pertaining to education and the welfare of graduate students”³;

Whereas a number of students in the PhD program have expressed confusion about the existing policy surrounding the comprehensive exams and what, if any, consequences exist for not adhering to said policy;

Resolved the EGSS council calls on the DISE Graduate Program Committee to issue a clear statement to all graduate students concerning the Department’s policy in relation to the completion of comprehensive exams;

Resolved the EGSS council calls on the DISE Graduate Program Committee to put forward a policy that does not impose any punitive measures on students;

Resolved the EGSS council requests that the DISE makes the above noted policy available on its website;

Resolved the EGSS DISE representative bring this issue before the DISE departmental meeting;

Resolved the EGSS council calls on the DISE to continue to work to understand and respond productively to graduate student experiences, particularly doctoral students’ experiences of comprehensive exams.

¹ EGSS (n.d.) “Our Mission.” Retrieved from <http://egss.mcgill.ca/about.html>

² enrollment numbers provided to the EGSS as of September 20th, 2012

³ EGSS (2012). Article 2.24, EGSS Constitution (approved September 24th, 2012), p.3