Ad Hoc Committee of Graduate Council

Review of Program Structures

Graduate studies at McMaster University has traditionally involved significant components of research for both Ph.D. and Master’s degrees. Many programs have been developed with options to allow some flexibility (e.g., full-time, part-time, thesis route, major paper, or all courses), however the academic regulations have largely been written for the traditional graduate program which promote full-time, on-campus study leading to a timely completion of the degree.

Over the past decade, a number of ‘course based’ Master’s programs have been successfully developed and launched. A course-based Master’s program can attract, and is often targeted at, a different kind of student with distinct experiences and needs, including older students who are working full-time. Problems occur when students switch between full-time and part-time status or want to take the summer off their studies. Complicating this is an intricate fee structure which is designed for students to maintain their admissions status throughout their degree, i.e., a full-time student remains full-time for the entirety of their degree.

Graduate student fees are charged in a variety of ways:

- Full-time, per term
- Full-time, per course
- Full-time, per half course
- Part-time, per term
- Part-time, per course
- Part-time, per half course

In light of the issues described above, the committee is directed to review the current graduate academic regulations and make recommendations, while considering the following questions;

- What are the differences and definitions for research-based and course-based Masters programs? Where are the boundaries between the two?
- Should different categories of graduate programs be created? For example: Ph.D., research-based Masters, Course-based Masters, etc.
- Do graduate fees provide appropriate flexibility for students such as those who are fully employed, SAS students, etc.?
- What should happen to a student’s status and fees charged when they take time off?
- Which of the related academic regulations should be re-written? Once identified, the committee will draft language changes to the academic regulations for Graduate Council and Senate approval.

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