The University’s strategic plan, Destination 2020, sets a number of goals in order to position itself as one of the top research institutions, one of which is to increase the number of students and improve the quality of their overall experience at the University of Ottawa.

In its Strategic Mandate Agreement with the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, the University committed to making excellence in research and training at the graduate level one of its three differentiating dimensions.

With this in mind, the University’s Administration Committee created a working group in 2013 to review the overall operations of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies and to recommend improvements. The working group comprised the following nine individuals:

**Mona Nemer,**
Vice-President, Research (chair)

**Ross Hastings,**
Interim Dean of FGPS; replaced by

**Tim Stanley,**
new Interim Dean of FGPS

**Hélène Perrault,**
Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences

**Ioan Nistor,**
Vice-Dean of Graduate Studies,
Faculty of Engineering

**Rudy Heap,**
Associate Vice-President, Research, and a former associate dean of FGPS

**Juan (Tito) Scaiano,**
research chairholder and former chair of the Department of Chemistry

**Louise Lemyre,**
research chair

**Erika Arban,**
graduate student, outgoing member of the Board of Governors

**Gabriel Perron,**
Banting postdoctoral fellow (science)

Over the past months, the working group held a number of consultations with members of the University community and received a number of submissions, many from vice-deans of graduate studies and graduate studies administrators.

The group completed its work and presented the results to me at the end of this summer in the form of a majority report and a minority report. The two reports were submitted to the AC/Deans Council and subsequently approved by the Administration Committee. They were formally submitted to the Senate of the University of Ottawa at its October 27, 2014, meeting.
You can review the recommendations put forth by the working group by consulting the working group's two reports. The recommendations raise some important points about the administration of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. This is why I have created, with the approval of the Administration Committee, a steering committee to review these recommendations and the feasibility of implementing them.

The committee will comprise the following five persons:

**Christian Detellier**,  
Vice-President Academic and Provost

**Michel Laurier**,  
Dean, Faculty of Education

**Timothy Stanley**,  
Interim Dean, FGPS

**Johanne Bourdages**,  
Associate Vice-President, Academic

**Hélène Perrault**,  
Dean, Faculty of Health Sciences

This steering committee will start its work very soon and is tasked with putting forth recommendations to the Administration Committee and the Senate, which are responsible for making the final decision on these recommendations and the future operation of FGPS.

In the meantime, I want to reassure all members of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies that there will be no change in any of the Faculty's activities or at faculty graduate studies offices at this time. FGPS and faculty members will have an opportunity to work with the steering committee over the coming months. I would like to highlight that it is important not to draw any conclusions at this time as we have not yet made any decisions.

We will be in touch with you regularly on the matter. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact my office at [vracademic@uOttawa.ca](mailto:vracademic@uOttawa.ca) if you have any comments or questions.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

**Christian Detellier**  
Vice-President Academic and Provost

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**Report to the Vice-President Academic and Provost Prepared by the Working Group studying the operations of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (FGPS)**

**Minority Report for the Working Group studying the operations of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (FGPS)**
Report to the Vice-President
Academic and Provost

Prepared by the Working Group studying the operations of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (FGPS)
Executive summary

In its *Destination 2020* strategic plan, the University of Ottawa set out a series of goals that reflect the University’s intention to stake its claim as a high calibre research institution. Among other things, the University committed itself to increasing the number of graduate students and improving their overall experience. With this in mind, a working group was formed to assess the general operations of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies and to recommend to the Vice-President Academic and Provost the necessary changes to achieve excellence in graduate studies.

The Working Group analyzed the governance of graduate studies at the University of Ottawa, as well as the services for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows across the University. It also examined how graduate studies are managed at other large Canadian universities and received guidance and recommendations from many members of the University community. The Working Group noted the community’s widespread commitment to postgraduate studies and research and the general willingness to maintain the highest standards of excellence while improving the student experience to allow the University to achieve its strategic goals. In that vein, the Working Group made four broad recommendations and some specific recommendations intended to:

1. maintain standards of excellence for the entire University
2. bring students closer to their home faculty and improve training
3. allow faculties to take greater responsibility at the graduate level
4. simplify decision-making and transactional processes

These objectives are based on proposed changes, including the following key ones:

1. Simplification of the central structure responsible for graduate studies and better use of the faculties, as well as consolidation of student services in existing units that already offer the services
2. Correlation with the Research mission and closer alignment with the strategic goals the University approved in *Destination 2020* and in the Strategic Mandate Agreement with the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.
3. Better guidance and support of graduate students, and improved academic and administrative services for them throughout their university years.

The Working Group hopes that this exercise will contribute to the realization of our vision: “The University of Ottawa will offer an unparalleled university experience and, through outstanding teaching and research, play a vital role in defining the world of tomorrow.”
A – Background

In its *Destination 2020* strategic plan, the University of Ottawa set out a series of goals that reflect the University's intention to stake its claim as a high calibre research institution among the best in Canada and the world.

The University also committed—through its Strategic Mandate Agreement with the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities—to making excellence in graduate research and education one of its three distinguishing features. Since the research and knowledge advancement component is integral to graduate studies, the University plans to offer first class education programs to prepare the leaders of tomorrow. In particular, the University committed itself to increasing the number of graduate students and improving their overall experience. Today, over 6500 master’s and doctoral students are enrolled in one of the University's 185 graduate programs, almost double the figure 20 years ago. By 2020, this number will top 7600 students a year. Graduate students will then represent 18% of the student population.

The University has offered graduate programs since 1932 and to that end established a “Graduate School,” which became a “School of Graduate Studies” in 1967. The school's mandate was to create and modify the programs and regulations governing graduate studies. In 1978, the School of Graduate Studies was entrusted with the development of research in order to ensure the quality of the programs and the excellence of student mentorship, and consequently became known as the School of Graduate Studies and Research (SGSR). In 1999, the expansion and management of research were placed under the responsibility of the Office of the Vice-President, Research. The SGSR then became the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (FGPS). The University now boasts 3600 graduate students.

According to its mandate, the FGPS is responsible for the “co-ordination and planning of activities within the University which relate to graduate programs.” In the 2000s, an exponential growth in research at the University led to a significant increase in the number of graduate students. In 2002, a substantial process of reassigning graduate-level operations to faculties began, following recommendations arising from the “Connections” project. Now the vast majority of the University’s faculties have an administrative framework dedicated to graduate studies, including a Vice-Dean of Graduate Studies position.

Therefore, from the very beginning, the FGPS has played a key role in the growth of research and graduate studies, and has contributed greatly to positioning the University as one of Canada’s major research universities.

With this in mind, the Administrative Committee of the University formed a working group, in November 2013, on the recommendation of the Vice-President Academic and Provost, to assess the general operations of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies and to recommend the necessary changes to achieve excellence in graduate studies and to ensure the University attracts the best students while offering them guidance and a great academic experience.
B – Mandate

The mandate given to the Working Group by the Vice-President Academic and Provost was comprised of six elements:

- Provide an overview of the services provided by the FGPS and faculties for graduate studies, including services for students, professors and faculties;
- Describe the human and financial resources of the FGPS and faculties in terms of graduate student services;
- Hold a consultation with the deans, vice-deans, professors, graduate students and postdoctoral researchers to obtain feedback on the decentralization and organization of graduate student services;
- Examine the models used to manage graduate studies at major research universities, including U15 universities, and learn from the best practices;
- Develop recommendations to improve the availability of services for graduate studies, taking the Destination 2020 strategic goals and the University’s financial situation into account;
- Submit a report containing the findings and recommendations to the Vice-President Academic and Provost.

C – Methodology

The Working Group, whose members are listed in Appendix A, met six times between December 1, 2013 and April 30, 2014, in addition to discussing and sharing information frequently by email.

First, the Working Group collected information within the University to fully understand the extent of activities pertaining to graduate studies, to identify all of the stakeholders and to highlight the constructive comments and current challenges. The Group also provided an overview of current trends at Canadian universities. Four key activities were involved in the overall approach:

- **Development of an inventory of services**: In cooperation with the FGPS staff and the vice-deans responsible for graduate studies, the Working Group had an inventory drawn up of the services offered by the central administration and faculties to professors and students at the graduate level.

- **Inter-institutional comparison**: An analysis of the websites of other Canadian universities in the U15 group was performed; personalized calls to the heads of some of those universities (i.e. McMaster, McGill, Université de Montréal, University of Toronto, Dalhousie, Western, Waterloo) helped to clarify how they work and how their graduate operations are distributed.
Consultation: During this review process, two types of consultation were performed:

- **Open consultations**: In March and April 2014, the entire university community was invited to submit comments to the Working Group; the invitation appeared in two issues of the University's online Gazette, and was posted on an ongoing basis on the main site of the Office of the Vice-President, Research. In addition, those interested could sign up for interviews to speak in person to the members of the Working Group (sessions took place on March 10 and 25, 2014).

- **Targeted consultations**: Certain key groups were targeted and invited to participate actively in the consultation (through a written contribution and in person with the members of the Working Group): the last two deans of the FGPS, the vice-deans responsible for graduate studies (see their joint response in Appendix C), the front-line staff in the faculties and FGPS (Appendix D), the Canada Research Chairs and University of Ottawa Research Chairs, members of the GSAÉD (Graduate Students’ Association), all department chairs, and members of the Commissions on Graduate Studies.

- **Consultation with deans**: The deans received joint submissions from the vice-deans responsible for graduate studies and the faculty deans, and were asked to comment and send any other recommendations to the Working Group. Four responded and indicated their support for the comments in the submissions.

- In total, 73 people took part in the consultation, in writing or in person, including 9 students, 31 professors, 14 academic administrators (deans, vice-deans and associate vice-presidents) and 19 administrators.

Deliberations: The Working Group met twice in April 2014 and held two online discussions, in March and June 2014, to review the information collected, identify the recurring messages and agree on the content of the final report and essence of the recommendations. During those discussions, one of the members (Dr. Tim Stanley, the new Acting Dean of the FGPS) chose to submit a minority report to accompany the current report.
D – Information collected

I – Responsibilities and services provided by the FGPS

In the current fiscal year, the Acting Dean of the FGPS, Dr. Ross Hastings, produced and presented a document to the committee detailing the Faculty’s activities (including services for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows) and its quality control processes. The full document can be found at Appendix E.

The activities relate to the following issues:

1. Teacher certification (for supervision of graduate students)
2. Thesis evaluation and thesis defence management
3. Development and updating of regulations and monitoring of their application
4. Student recruitment and communication
5. Admissions and registration
6. Integrity
7. Appeal procedures
8. Professional development
9. Awards and financial support
10. Development and evaluation of programs (including programs with international content)

The FGPS has 34 employees (including three professors: dean, vice-dean and associate dean). It has an annual operating budget of $3.25 million (75% of which is used to pay regular employees, and the rest of which goes to contractor wages, travel, promotional materials, and so on). The Faculty manages scholarship funds and endowment funds of over $36 million a year. The FGPS’s organizational chart can be found in Appendix F.

Note that Saint-Paul University, which only manages a dozen theses a year, relies on the expertise of the University of Ottawa’s FGPS to ensure the quality of its programs and to develop appropriate university regulations.
II – Graduate services offered by the faculties

In each of its faculties, other than the FGPS, the University of Ottawa has Graduate Offices headed by a vice-dean. Most Graduate Offices have three or four employees (e.g. academic and administrative assistants), in addition to some 40 academic assistants (or equivalent) in the departments. (Refer to Appendix G.)

These services cover the following sectors:

1. Student recruitment
2. Admissions
3. Scholarships (promotes and provides assistance in preparing external scholarship applications, pays out scholarships and assistantships)
4. Enrolment and graduations
5. Guidance and support (thesis committee, master’s thesis defence)
6. Program development and delivery
7. Infrastructure and research services
8. Management of interdisciplinary programs

III – Models for managing graduate studies in Canadian U15 universities

- A review of U15 universities and interviews with some of their administrators highlighted the diversity of governance and management structures for graduate studies.

- Regardless of their name, they all have a centralized body that is fully or partially responsible for managing graduate studies. Moreover, they all have an academic leader (dean, associate vice-president, vice-provost, associate provost). It is interesting to note that some of these academic leaders feel that they are mainly acting as a facilitator or convenor for graduate studies. Others have assumed a supervisory or quality assurance role.

- A number of U15 universities have recently reviewed how their graduate studies are governed or are in the process of doing so. Therefore, the University of Ottawa’s initiative is in line with what other universities are doing.

- A trend toward decentralization and faculty accountability has been observed in these universities: decision-making processes are increasingly closer to where the programs are being delivered; transactional processes and certain services (such as skills development programs, scholarship management, quality assurance of programs, thesis supervision, and organization of thesis defences) are being assigned to other units within the campus.

- The benefits of decentralization include the following: accountability of disciplinary faculties, resulting in greater commitment to graduate studies; bridging of graduate studies with research; higher student satisfaction because of easier and more consistent access to the various services; and optimized processes.
The drawbacks most frequently mentioned were in relation to the impact (not always positive) on the development and growth of interdisciplinary programs; the challenge of maintaining uniform standards of excellence for all programs (thesis defence, scholarship allocation); and the difficulty in consistently ensuring the excellence and effectiveness of management in the faculties because of the ongoing turnover of graduate education staff.

The best practices noted by the Working Group include the importance of including an evaluation of all new approaches and processes (typically after five years); the establishment of a faculty forum to promote innovation and the sharing of best practices, and to improve the channels of communication within the university; efforts to minimize administrative barriers and bureaucratic irritants that impede the academic progress of students; development and continuous updating of a website with all of the relevant information on programs and services (an online one-stop service); and measures to foster the students’ sense of belonging to their program and faculty, since it is a means of ensuring retention and success.

### E – Summary of consultations

#### I - Vision of graduate studies

- All of the stakeholders emphasized the importance of graduate studies in a research university. They all proudly recognized the significant expansion of graduate studies and research at the University of Ottawa over the past decade. The participants were in favour of the University’s strategic goal to increase the number of graduate students, particularly at the doctoral level.

- The importance of bridging research with master’s and PhD programs was repeatedly mentioned.

- There was consensus on the need to maintain the highest standards of excellence for all graduate programs: beginning with the recruitment of better professors and students, the development of leading-edge courses, guidance and support for students, and the provision of academic and extracurricular support services.

- Concern for improving the student experience from the time of registration to graduation emerged as a recurrent theme.

- Several stakeholders stressed the importance of ensuring the development and proper management of interdisciplinary programs of study. At the same time, they expressed concern about the current method of implementing interdisciplinary programs, which appears to be leaving students and professors short of resources.
II - Management of graduate studies

- The reassigning of FGPS activities and operations to the faculties has been generally well-received. However, a lack of clarity on the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders and units appears to persist.

- There seems to be widespread confusion when it comes to precisely defining the roles of each administrative unit, which is detrimental to proper program management, information distribution, and the student experience.

- Many participants in the consultation criticized the cumbersome and slow administrative processes related to the current operation of graduate studies, and complained about the duplication of approvals at the various levels.

- There was consensus regarding operation of the FGPS and the current management of graduate studies: improvements are needed and the status quo is not acceptable. If the University wants to expand the graduate studies sector and improve the quality of the student experience, it must quickly implement reforms in order to enhance the importance and visibility of graduate studies and to improve the efficiency of its services.

III - Governance

- While acknowledging the substantial role the FGPS has played in the recent expansion of graduate studies, there is a desire in faculty units to maintain or even increase their commitment and responsibilities toward graduate students.

- At the same time, there is unanimous support for centrally maintaining the promotion of graduate studies and for retaining the capacity to monitor and assure the quality of programs and mentorship, in order to ensure the overall excellence of graduate studies.

- A number of individuals pointed out the importance of establishing levels of appeal (arbitration, mediation) further away from and independent of faculties and departments, and of setting university-wide standards to ensure fairness for all students.

- The vice-deans and administrators of graduate studies expressed their wish for more interfaculty forums to discuss graduate education issues, as well as better coordination between the Vice-President Academic and Provost and the Office of the Vice-President, Research.

- A number of FGPS services are being offered in parallel to similar services offered by other university organizations that serve undergraduate students (e.g. scholarships and financial aid, fraud cases, admissions, recruitment), which underscores the appropriateness of considering the consolidation of these services.

- Intake, support, and services for international graduate students are inadequate and must be improved.

- The mechanisms in place to ensure excellence in mentorship and the graduation of PhD students must be improved.
F - Recommendations

Based on the observations, data, feedback and the University’s objectives, the Working Group is issuing four general recommendations and a subsequent set of specific recommendations.

The recommendations seek to:

1. maintain standards of excellence for the University as a whole
2. bring students closer to their home faculty and improve their education
3. simplify decision-making and transactional processes, and avoid duplication
4. enable faculties to take on more responsibility at the graduate level
5. ensure that graduate studies at the University of Ottawa reflect the vision articulated in Destination 2020: “The University of Ottawa will offer an unparalleled university experience and, through outstanding teaching and research, play a vital role in defining the world of tomorrow.”

I - General recommendations

1. Vision and governance

Programs of study and graduate education—whether in terms of professional or specialist diplomas, or research programs (master’s and PhD)—are at the core of our university mission and must remain one of our institution’s strategic priorities. The University must continue to be a leader in research and graduate studies by striving for the highest standards of excellence for its programs, and by setting the collective goal of recruiting the best students, to whom we will offer an unrivalled education and academic experience.

To that end, the University should rethink its graduate and postdoctoral governance model, since the relevance of a “faculty” structure whose function is to support graduate studies across the university, such as a faculty of graduate studies, is not obvious in the current context. The capacity to support the development and quality assurance of graduate study programs, as well as their alignment with the University’s strategic goals and research priorities, should be maintained by the University within the central administration.

Central administration must maintain the quality assurance of graduate education programs, in accordance with the Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP/PIAQ) approved by the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance. This will require the development of policies for graduate studies, as well as coordination with the faculties in the scope of interdisciplinary programs.

The reassignment of activities and services to home faculties, which is already underway, must continue. In this process, we need to clearly distinguish the responsibilities that will be under the central administration from those to be relegated to the faculties. It will therefore be important to redefine the role and levels of responsibility between these two bodies in terms of decision-making powers related to program admission, program development, review of content and coordination with professional bodies, student mentorship, and the general management of graduate programs and student services.

Accountability for the development, visibility and management of programs will continue to be the responsibility of the faculties; in particular, deans will be accountable for compliance with the requirement
for quality and excellence in program planning and delivery, including student mentorship.

The University must develop processes and incentives to ensure the vitality of interdisciplinary programs. Thus, we recommend that the central body dedicated to graduate studies be restructured.

2. Integration with research

The University should strengthen the ties between graduate studies and research. It should better align the strategic goals for research development and graduate studies. Among other things, the pursuit of excellence in graduate studies and training must be at the core of developing multi-sectoral partnerships and international alliances.

3. Resource allocation

The University should comprehensively review its approach to funding graduate studies, in order to ensure sufficient cash flow and the appropriate internal allocation of support to graduate studies, by redefining the short- and medium-term financial framework and considering the physical and human resources needed.

4. Services and the student experience in graduate and postdoctoral studies

The University must improve the delivery of services and the effectiveness of the administrative processes related to graduate studies. It must also do a better job of integrating the management of graduate studies by way of its existing structures to avoid duplication and to optimize its operations.

The services can be defined in terms of purely administrative processes related to the student’s academic journey (from the time of application to graduation) or in terms of the student’s progress toward meeting the requirements of the program of study. It would be desirable for the administrative and transactional processes to fall under the centralized management of student services, and for those processes to be increasingly computerized. This could be done by moving some FGPS services to specialized units that offer similar services to undergraduate students, e.g. payment of scholarships and transfer of admission processes to the Registrar’s Office or Financial Aid. Obviously, these offices would have to set up a service tailored to graduate education and to the specific needs of graduate students.

The faculties could then focus on decisions related to program requirements.

II - Specific recommendations

The specific recommendations are intended to better define the roles and responsibilities of the various bodies, to eliminate administrative duplication, to continue to move certain activities to the faculties, to improve mentorship and services for students and interns at the graduate level, and to help the University achieve its Destination 2020 goals.

1. Reconfigure the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies so that it is a new entity within the central administration, which would be the responsibility of the Vice-President Academic and Provost and would maintain close ties with the Office of the Vice-President, Research. This entity should be under the responsibility of an academic leader, and its mandate would be to promote graduate education and research. An associate vice-president could assume this leadership role and his or her duties would include:

   • Developing and implementing a university-wide strategy to promote and enhance graduate education
• Developing policies and procedures for graduate studies, and providing the expertise needed to ensure consistent interpretation

• Collaborating with the various university bodies to support the University’s commitment to excellence in graduate education

• Coordinating graduate studies with research development and operations

• Presiding over the Commissions on Graduate Studies (i.e. Humanities and Sciences)

• Reviewing and optimizing the academic training stages and ensuring that they are followed (while the faculties monitor individual progress)

2. Continue to reassign certain activities fully or partly undertaken by the FGPS to existing faculties and units that are already providing the services to other groups in the university community, by adapting and improving them. These include:

a. The management of internal scholarships (admission, tuition fees, etc.) for graduate studies must be transferred to the Scholarships and Financial Aid sector.

b. The management of master’s, doctoral and postdoctoral scholarships from external agencies, such as the three federal granting councils, could be consolidated in the Office of the Vice-President, Research, where some scholarships for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows are already being managed.

c. Quality assurance of graduate programs can be transferred to the Associate Vice-President Academic, who is already managing the review of undergraduate programs, enhancing the research training component.

d. Student recruitment should be transferred to the faculties, who, in cooperation with the Registrar, will develop an action plan to be approved by the Office of the Vice-President Academic and Provost.

e. The International Office will be in charge of welcoming international students.

f. The Associate Registrar for Graduate Studies section could fall under the responsibility of the Registrar. The relevance of the related positions will have to be examined.

g. Complaints, misconduct and appeals could be managed based on the nature of the circumstances (i.e. research or education), either through an extension or adjustment of the existing processes for undergraduate students, or through the regulations and bodies governing research.

h. The Altitude program could be offered by the Teaching and Learning Support Service, which needs to provide further support to master’s, doctoral and postdoctoral students.

i. The faculties, in cooperation with the Office of the Vice-President, Research, will manage the files of postdoctoral fellows.

3. The process of determining the capacity for student mentoring by professors should be assigned to the faculties.

a. The requirement for certification of the University’s regular professors at the FGPS should be eliminated.

b. The certification process for external professors and researchers will have to be maintained.
c. The Associate Vice-President of Graduate Studies, in cooperation with the faculties, would develop the guidelines and the faculties would determine the process.

d. The faculties would be responsible for mentoring their students and would be accountable to the Vice-President Academic and Provost for matters arising from mentorship.

4. Processes leading to graduation, especially requirements related to earning a PhD, will have to be reviewed to determine the nature of the processes to be maintained and how responsibilities will be shared in the organization, as well as how those processes, such as the PhD thesis defence process, will be implemented. It is strongly suggested that universal guidelines and expectations be established, and that management of thesis defences be left up to the faculties. As a guiding principle, it is important to ensure at least one approval level above the initial decision-maker. Thus, in the faculties with schools or departments, the responsibility for managing thesis evaluation and defence would lie with the school or department, with approval from the Dean or Vice-Dean of Graduate Studies. In the other faculties (law, management, education), the Dean or Vice-Dean of Graduate Studies would assume management, with the approval of the Associate Vice-President of Graduate Studies. Saint-Paul University could choose one of these two options.

5. In order to clarify the responsibility of each of the stakeholders and of the central administration, the faculty and students, it is important to develop a guide (or clarify the existing documentation) as the mechanisms are being developed and implemented. In particular, the Working Group recommends that a “Graduate Student Charter” be developed, as well as a guide to best practices in supervision, so that mutual expectations are clearly stated. For example, the Charter should stipulate that all students are entitled to quality supervision that gives them every opportunity to successfully complete their program within a reasonable period of time. Conversely, the expectations for student progress could be spelled out.

6. Student dropout rates in certain graduate programs of study are of particular concern. Although the problem is not unique at the University of Ottawa, the Working Group recommends that the University address it and set an example for others. The factors affecting graduation (see Appendix H) will need to be examined, and appropriate mechanisms to optimize the quality of the graduate student experience must be established, both in terms of the duration of studies and the quality of supervision and overall guidance.

7. Develop a mechanism to ensure continuity and complementarity between faculty management and central management of programs. The mechanism must ensure, among other things, the attainment of goals previously set out, such as those pertaining to registration numbers, student dropout rates and the average duration of programs of study leading to graduation. This data could be collected and analyzed centrally, potentially by the Institutional Research section.

8. The University should review all of the processes for managing graduate studies in order to avoid overlapping control points and approval levels. The Associate Vice-President Academic will have to map out the management processes and, along with some of the faculties and services, develop new procedures to simplify the approval processes and optimize their effectiveness. This review must include the admission and registration processes, and tracking at various stages of the program of study. Responsibility for the decision-making points for each matter will be established, as well as for matters that are more transactional in nature.
9. The electronic information management system for graduate studies must, as a minimum, allow faculties and supervisors to better track the progress of each student, but will also highlight the supervisory work done by professors. The University should review its computer systems, particularly the Rabaska system, to improve information sharing between the various individuals involved in graduate studies. A committee of users has already been created to determine the system’s essential parameters. It will be important for the student information system to incorporate and reflect the changes recommended in this report. The Associate Vice-President of Graduate Studies should serve on this committee.

10. The University should ensure that an up-to-date, effective graduate studies website, serving as a one-stop service for graduate students, is maintained.

G - Conclusion

This first step of reflecting on the vision and management of graduate studies at the University of Ottawa shows that our community is firmly committed to the pursuit of excellence in graduate studies and cares deeply about improving the experience and education of our students.

The internal consultations and the assessment of the practices of other research universities revealed the urgency of making certain changes that could improve the student experience and help the University to achieve the ambitious Destination 2020 goals in the current governmental and institutional budget context. Maintaining universal standards of excellence and simplifying administrative processes are the principles that must guide any action or change. Regardless of where a service, decision or transaction takes place, students must be able to easily and seamlessly navigate through the various University sectors throughout their university years.

The postsecondary world is changing, and the University is no exception. Changes may need to be made to this report’s recommendations over the next few years and their relevance may need to be reassessed. Therefore, we strongly suggest including an assessment of all new operational processes and changes within three to five years of their implementation.

Appendices

Appendices are available on demand and in the language in which they were submitted. Please contact the Office of Vice-President Academic and Provost, vpacademic@uOttawa.ca
Minority Report for the Working Group studying the operations of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (FGPS)

Prepared by Timothy J. Stanley, PhD
Interim Dean
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
July 24, 2014
Senate Mandate

The Senate has mandated the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, “to promote academic excellence in graduate programs and in postdoctoral studies” and more specifically, “The FGPS advises the faculties and the Senate on the development of graduate and postdoctoral studies at the University of Ottawa.”

As Interim Dean and titular head of the Faculty, I have an obligation to ensure that the University receives the benefit of my best advice with respect to these matters. My best advice is that the proposed reform of the FGPS as outlined in the report of the Working Group on the Functioning of FGPS will seriously undermine the ability of the University to ensure the quality of its graduate programs and will put the University at serious risk not only of being unable to reach the objectives of *Destination 2020*, but of substantial lawsuits.

I wish to be clear that my objections do not arise out of a belief that the *status quo* is necessarily acceptable or desirable. If nothing else, the consultations have made clear that people do not understand what FGPS does or why, nor do they understand who is responsible for what. Since I became Interim Dean at the beginning of February 2014, I have proceeded with the first major overhaul of the regulations governing thesis defences in close to thirty years. Revised procedures around membership in FGPS are waiting for the Working Group’s recommendations before proceeding to a wider consultation. I have changed the structure of the Executive Committee of FGPS, incorporating some faculty vice-deans as members elected by Council. The Executive Committee is currently reviewing operational decisions that require its approval to determine what can be devolved to the faculty vice-deans and the academic administrators within the faculties. As a member of the steering committee for the new Student Information System, I have been working to ensure that it better meets the needs of graduate studies generally, and that it equips all those who manage graduate studies, from individual students and supervisors, program directors to graduate vice-deans, deans and the provost, with the information and capacities they need to manage individual cases and entire programs in decentralized ways. I have also been working with the personnel of the FGPS to ensure that we demonstrate to graduate students and members of the FGPS that we are the key resource that protects the interests of students, the place of final recourse where problems can be aired and solutions found because of a global perspective on graduate studies both within and outside the University. We have already changed our communication processes and procedures relating to the closing of student files, now ensuring that supervisors and program directors are aware of students at risk before closing their files. Finally, the Council of the FGPS has agreed to study a proposal from the faculty vice-deans of graduate studies to restructure the FGPS.

My concern is that the recommendations of the Working Group do not take into account the realities facing graduate studies at the University of Ottawa, and, if implemented, will seriously limit the capacity of the university to respond to the emerging challenges. The recommendations for the most part are uninformed and ill considered and, if implemented, would have disastrous results for graduate studies at the University of Ottawa.

The central recommendations of the report to replace the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, dispersing its personnel and functions into different units of the central administration, and replacing the Dean’s Office and Faculty Council with an Associate Vice-President who will chair the Science and Humanities Commissions, will severely weaken the central leadership of graduate studies at a time when the leadership needs to be enhanced.

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The central recommendations of the report are not evidence-based

The proposal to split up FGPS and its functioning is not based on critical examination of the actual problems. There was no discussion at the Working Group of a lack of coordination between the FGPS scholarship sector and the Financial Aid Office. Similarly, there was no discussion of a lack of coordination between FGPS and the Registrar’s office. The report does not specify the problems that splitting up FGPS’s administrative functions is alleged to be fixing. There is no accounting provided of what this proposal will cost. If some functions devolve to the Faculites, before proceeding it is essential to know how many new positions will need to be created, how these people will be centrally trained, and how much this change will cost.

At no time did the Working Group examine the strengths and weaknesses of having graduate studies centrally led by a faculty, a school, a college, an office or an associate vice-president alone. Indeed, the information the Working Groups did collect shows that the majority of U15 universities either have faculties of graduate studies or have schools. Only one currently has an “Office” (Waterloo) and what this office does is very similar to what the staff of FGPS does.²

Even the proposal to centralize the Quality Assurance functions under the Vice-President Academic is not based on any discussions at the Working Group. At no time, did the Working Group explore the relative merits, advantages and disadvantages of the current system with one that is centralized. Under the current system, the Vice-Dean of Graduate Studies has great latitude in working with programs to ensure that their weaknesses are addressed. This kind of collegial dialogue is much easier when it is with a vice-dean than it is with an Associate Vice-President. In at least four different faculties and St. Paul, these discussions have ensured that specific programs meet quality assurance standards, an outcome that would have been unlikely if a less collegial model had been followed. Behind the quality assurance process, the University is trying to change the everyday culture of managing graduate studies so that it more closely involves the professors who teach in the program as well as students. Such a cultural change requires on-going collegial discussions. The fact that quality assurance is housed in the same place as the group dealing with specific student cases and programmatic issues both nourishes and is nourished by the quality assurance process. Finally, given the number of graduate programs and undergraduate programs that the University has, and given the separate IQAP for our joint programs with Carleton University, a single person cannot manage the evaluations file.

The report does not show how the current system of graduate studies is preventing the University from developing and furthering its research profile. The consultation process involved fewer than 3% of the professors with FGPS membership and less than 0.1% of graduate students, and there was far from unanimous agreement that the problem was somehow FGPS. Indeed, as I pointed out in my March 8, 2014 memo to the members of the Working Group, “Correcting some errors of fact,” most of the complaints about FGPS received during the consultation have nothing to do with FGPS’s actual functioning, regulations or procedures. Indeed, in many instances FGPS was blamed for things that were under the direct authority of the local program director, or the faculty Graduate Studies Office concerned.

Most disturbing is the recommendation to split up the various administrative offices of FGPS. The report fails utterly to engage with the fact that in the current arrangement one file informs another and that this is the value-added factor that enables the development of policies and practices, as well as helping to ensure that small problems do not become big ones. For example, despite better-prepared files and more possible

² Dr. Susan E. Horton, Associate Provost Graduate Studies, University of Waterloo, personal conversation.
submissions, we have had our worst year ever in the SSHRC Vanier competitions. The feeling in many faculties is that this reflects the fact that this year’s cohort is weaker than previously. The drop in our scholarship performance appears to be an admissions and recruitment problem. This means that we need to enhance our admissions scholarships for the best students (which we are proposing to do). More importantly, we need to ensure that graduate students with the Vanier profile are properly prepared by their supervisors and their programs to be competitive (e.g., to publish right away). This is no longer an admissions or recruitment issue but a supervision issue. By having all the files together in one place and integrating the central operations with those of the faculties, the kind of challenge presented by the Vanier scholarship competition becomes solvable. The real challenge is not to split these files up, but to ensure that this strength of one file informs another better informs the functioning of the faculty graduate offices and programs.

At precisely the moment when the University wishes to build graduate studies, to increase its profile for graduate student achievement and heighten the importance it gives to graduate studies, as the complexity and needs of the graduate student population are growing, the Working Group proposes to disperse the single most important and experienced resource that the University has with respect to graduate studies. It proposes to disperse this resource, rendering its functioning and accountability to those who manage graduate studies on a day-to-day basis more difficult on the basis of insufficient evidence and without engaging with the real issues involved in this functioning.

The Working Group Recommendations and What FGPS Actually Does

Two recommendations of the Working Group in particular demonstrate its failure to look at what FGPS actually does. The first is the recommendation that the admissions sector be included with the undergraduate admissions sector under the Registrar. The FGPS’s self-study document provides a detailed description of what the FGPS admissions sector does. The Working Group does not have access to an equivalent document looking at the work of the admissions sector under the Registrar, nor did it meet with the Registrar. Yet the draft report is recommending integrating the FGPS admissions sector with the other, without having looked to see whether undergraduate admissions’ needs are different. They are almost certainly more centralized than FGPS, which has devolved most responsibilities for admissions to the home faculties. Since the main work of the FGPS admissions sector is to support the Graduate Secretariats of the faculties in their admissions processes, if anything what is needed is closer integration between the FGPS sector and the admissions personnel of the faculties. Removing the central graduate admissions sector from a structure in which the vice-deans of graduate studies have direct input into the services and operations provided and placing it under the Registrar, as suggested by the Working Group, will not improve integration with the Graduate Secretariats, but will make it more difficult. Experience has shown that, as with virtually all other services at the University, when graduate studies are integrated with undergraduate studies, the special needs of graduate students are not met as the service become overwhelmed by the much higher number of undergraduate students and the complexity of graduate students’ needs. Furthermore, the Associate Registrar of FGPS is already accountable to the Registrar. The position exists in the first place because of the recognition that the two sectors are vastly different.
The second example that shows a failure to take into account the actual functioning of FGPS is the recommendation to move the scholarship sector in with financial aid, except for the Tri-Council Scholarships, which will be integrated into the Office of the Vice-President Research. While the recent decision of the three granting councils to send the funding for scholarships to the University through CIHR lends a certain logic to this position, the Working Group’s proposal confuses accounting and reporting requirements with the requirements for academic decision-making. First, the majority of graduate scholarships are the admissions scholarships. How would Financial Aid co-ordinate this with graduate admissions? Second, almost all FGPS Scholarships, including exceptions to the admissions scholarships, require academic adjudication. The report does not discuss how this will be done at Financial Aid. Again the graduate scholarship function is currently in a different location because it is different. Under the Working Group’s proposal the AVP Graduate Studies will have no administrative control over the scholarship sector. Given the complexity of the different scholarships and their rules, the effect of such things as the student’s registration status, the need to input scholarship decision into the Student Information System and payroll systems, and even the desire of students for one-stop shopping, it is essential to keep the scholarships together in one office over which the AVP Graduate Studies has some authority. Since scholarships link to recruitment, student satisfaction and retention, and even thesis supervision, the scholarship office needs to be in the same place as the other offices managing graduate students’ files.

The proposal to put responsibility for Tri-Council Scholarships under the Vice-President Research may make more sense academically than putting it under Financial Aid, but the implications of this change are not spelled out and appear not to have been considered. First, will other academically adjudicated scholarships such as the OGS be put in with Financial Aid? How will this change better enable the faculties, which are responsible for the preliminary ranking of all of these scholarship applicants, to coordinate the results between the different competitions so as to ensure that the best students receive some form of funding? A duplication of responsibility for scholarships, either by placing some under the vice-deans graduate studies and others under the vice-deans research, or by providing differing lines of accountability for the vice-deans graduate studies (for Tri-Council to the VPR and for the other scholarships to Financial Aid) will make this coordination more difficult and unnecessarily cause overlapping of functions. In this last year, our top-ranked SSHRC Vanier candidate was also highly ranked by her Faculty for SSHRC, but lost out on the national competitions for both. Yet, she was ranked 13th for OGS by her Faculty which gets 12 OGS scholarships. I am aware of similar occurrences in at least three faculties. This suggests that there is a need for greater coordination between these competitions, something that will be difficult to do if responsibility is divided up into different units.

Finally, all graduate scholarships, their handling and development are associated with registrarial functions. For all of these scholarships, considerable programming is required with the student payments and financial management in the Student Information System, which requires much interaction between the awards sector and graduate registration and admission sectors. To give but one example, a student applies on-line for a Tri-Council scholarship, but a staff member has to enter into the Student Information System and calculate the student’s average, and do so in a timely way before the adjudication committee of the home faculty meets. Once adjudicated at the faculty level, these calculations need to confirmed centrally prior to submission to the granting council. If these responsibilities are transferred to the Financial Aid Office and to the Vice-President Research, the communications links with graduate admission/registration will need to be maintained (with high bandwidth). Given the very short timeframes for these competitions, rather than simplifying and improving functioning, the Working Group’s proposal makes this more complicated, which in turn is likely to mean that we will have fewer rather than more external scholarships.
In order to succeed, a reshaping of graduate studies needs to ensure better integration across the board of the central control of graduate studies with the home faculties. This requires the creation and enhancement of the processes through which the faculties bring their concerns and needs forward, but also through which central insights and objectives are brought back to the faculties. This needs to be done in relation to the deans, the vice-deans, the department heads and graduate program directors and ultimately with the individual thesis supervisors and their students.

The report is completely silent on this issue in its recommendations. For example, in their presentation to the committee, the vice-deans for Graduate Studies expressed a clear desire for more direct involvement in the day-to-day central management of graduate studies and closer integration on their part with the office of the Vice-President Academic. This desire is mentioned in the report but not discussed in any of its recommendations. Ironically by proposing to abolish the FGPS and with it, the Council of FGPS, the report is proposing to abolish the one central structure in which the vice-deans Graduate Studies have decision-making authority.

Experience at uOttawa and at other universities has repeatedly shown that overlapping and collaborative leadership balancing the needs of the University centrally with those of individual faculties and programs is vital to ensuring quality of graduate programs, student satisfaction and growth. Such leadership was key to the University’s success in graduate expansion in recent years. Every day, this leadership helps programs and faculties manage individual students and their concerns by making the benefit of knowledge and experience of graduate studies throughout the entire university available to decision-makers.

The complexity of graduate studies and the enormous consequences of failure arising from administrative errors require simultaneously central and local management. Whether in negotiating the rules governing Tri-Council scholarships, dealing with issues of academic integrity, or ensuring equity in procedures for equivalent cases on-going collegial discussion and decision-making is essential. These conversations can be at times difficult and the balance between central and local needs is necessarily dynamic because much of graduate studies is based on individual situations and circumstances. Here it is important to note that graduate studies are fundamentally different from undergraduate studies. PhD programs especially build on the individual relationships between thesis supervisors and students. The relationship between a graduate student and his or her supervisor often determines what courses the student takes, which professors he or she works with, even future career possibilities as well as the chances of the student’s own individual success. As such, graduate studies are not just about establishing coherent curricula or procedures; they are about building individual relationships that, like all important human relationships, cannot be reduced to a series of rules.
Moreover, the investment of students and their families in graduate studies is significantly greater than their investments in undergraduate studies. Graduate students, especially at the PhD level, build their identities around their status as students. It is who they are in the world. They see their success in their studies not only as building their futures, but also as creating who they are. Unlike in undergraduate studies, where failure may mean that students have to retake a course, failure in thesis work or a final research project can cost people years of their lives, damage their relationships with peers and support networks, as well as result in considerable psychological and financial costs. In the case of international students especially, often the life savings and futures of entire families are at stake.

This brings a powerful moral imperative to the management of graduate studies, which in turn requires balanced decision-making and overlapping accountability. For example, while it is without question that those professors who are experts in a particular field or discipline are best placed to decide which students applying for admission are likely to succeed in their program, at times admissions decisions can be coloured by other factors. Sometimes professors push their colleagues for the admission of unqualified applicants because of the professor’s own inexperience, because the professor wants to show that he or she is active in graduate studies for purposes of tenure and promotion, or even because they want the student’s skills to be used in their laboratory. Not all graduate directors are able to resist such pressure. Program managers can also feel pressured to admit as many students as possible (even if it means admitting unqualified students) because of their faculty’s financial concerns.

Recently, the Supreme Court of Canada has added a legal dimension to this moral dimension. By refusing to hear the appeal in the *Gauthier v. Saint Germain* case, the Supreme Court of Canada has in effect accepted that graduate admission letters constitute legally-binding contracts between the student and the institution to ensure the student’s supervision. The University is currently facing a lawsuit over an alleged failure to ensure thesis supervision, and is likely to fact more of these lawsuits in future.

Removing the admissions office from a system of academic governance removes the peer-review balance that allows programs to appropriately respond to these pressures. Once the student is admitted, the contract has been established and it is too late to say, “Well, you really didn’t have what it takes and should not have been admitted in the first place.” The system of arms-length checks and balances is thus not simply a bureaucratic function, but is fundamentally an academic one and is essential if the University is to admit the very best students, those who will succeed in their studies. It is essential that admissions decisions be informed by an overall knowledge of all aspects of graduate studies. A central office, distanced from local pressures, which has a *droit de regard* on admissions matters, protects students and the university. But this office and its understanding of admissions must not only be informed by knowledge of admissions procedures and policies, it also must be aware of the consequences that arise in terms of damaged lives and for the University in terms of potential liabilities when students who are unable to succeed are admitted to graduate programs.
Two other factors are also changing the nature of graduate programs. The oversupply of PhD graduates in certain areas means that graduate education, its forms and purposes must change. According to HEQCO, less than 25% of PhD graduates in Canada become professors. As one of its recent studies concluded, “The majority of PhD graduates will not secure full-time academic positions, even if this is the dominant aspiration motivating students to seek these degrees. The education offered to students in PhD programs should accommodate this reality.” In certain disciplines, once the attrition rate is factored in, only one in ten students who start a PhD become professors. Even in the sciences, which have slightly better results than the humanities, the entry-level qualification for the university professorate is increasingly a postdoc. Yet, almost all graduate programs are geared to producing professors or academic researchers. Changing this involves a long-term project of changing the way graduate programs at the University are designed, managed and evaluated. Above all, it means that the University cannot rely on individual professors and students alone to meet the job challenge. Professional development for graduate students needs to be provided in ways that are again both centrally supported and locally engaged. It also means that the central authorities for graduate studies need access to multiple levers to engage the faculties and programs in the challenges of this new reality.

Similarly, the profiles of our graduates students and postdoctoral scholars are changing. Graduate education in Canada and globally is increasingly becoming internationalized as is the research that underlies it. With this internationalization comes new challenges of recruitment and retention of the best graduate students. Some international students, for example, support their families with their graduate admissions scholarships. The MITACS 2013 Canadian Postdoc Survey Institutional Report found that three-quarters of University of Ottawa postdocs are married or have common law partners, one quarter have children and that only 9.3% stated that they have access to a career counselor. As such, graduate students and postdocs have specialized needs that will increasingly need to be accommodated if the University is to meet its Destination 2020 targets. There is already a desperate need for family housing on campus for graduate students. Access to specialized career counselors and support services are also needed. Creating these resources, however, presupposes the existing of an academic network that engages with the needs of students at the level of individual supervisors, programs and faculties as well as centrally.

Students with physical, mental and learning disabilities are becoming more and more present in graduate studies and are now signing on as postdocs. The stress of graduate education can contribute to the development of clinical depression and anxiety disorders, which further complicate student-supervisor relationships. When these relationships break down, students may not only lose their supervisor, but also access to their thesis data, their employment and even more importantly the network of peers who sustain them. The emerging mental health crisis in graduate studies requires considerable attention. Among other things, this means that a whole series of taken-for-granted assumptions need to be made explicit and formalized. As Dr. Marilyn Rose, the former Dean of Graduate Studies at Brock University, has powerfully argued, every graduate program needs to clearly establish what is “academically essential” to succeed in its programs, since these are things that cannot be accommodated. For example, the new regulations of FGPS will make clear that to obtain a PhD or Master’s Degree, a student not only needs to write an acceptable thesis,
but must also defend it in front of a jury. As something that is “academically essential,” the fact of the defence cannot be accommodated even if its form can be changed (e.g., length of time, lieu and whether it has to be held in a single continuous session). A change that requires basic assumptions to be made explicit and integrated by all professors cannot be achieved through central fiat alone. It requires multiple overlapping and collegial discussions at the level of the central administration, the deans, the vice-deans, the department chairs and program directors as well as with groups of individual professors. Nor can the University afford to wait until individual faculties are facing human rights complaints (as indeed they are beginning to) to find a solution. If the University does not manage this change, the courts will. In effect, it needs a centrally-coordinated academic structure to address this issue, one that brings together expertise in accommodations and in graduate education as well as knowledge of best practices at uOttawa and elsewhere, something which is far beyond the capacities of individual programs and faculties. The structure needs to be reinforced in ways that make addressing this issue a central part of quality assurance.

The Need to Build the University’s Capacity for Graduate Studies

Rather than enhancing the University’s capacity to build this structure, the proposed restructuring of graduate studies dismantles it. Students with special needs—international students, students with disabilities, First Nations, Inuit and Métis students—require specialized services. In this respect, all graduate students also have special needs and require specialized services. When integrated into the structures that service undergraduate students, these needs disappear. First, graduate students are simply swamped by the numbers of students at the undergraduate level. Second, the complexity of their cases, the multiple jurisdictions and requirements under which they often function, mean that their cases take more time and effort. Third, graduate students have different academic needs. The challenges of writing a PhD thesis are very different from writing an undergraduate essay, for example. Fourth, no single aspect of a graduate student’s file is separate from any other aspect. Every file in graduate studies necessarily informs every other file. For example, a graduate student who has completed residency might wish to change their registration status to being a part-time student. This is a fairly straightforward matter for undergraduate students, but for a graduate student this change can have significant negative consequences. For example, if the student holds a Tri-Council or admissions scholarship, the student will lose it. Even if the student does not have a scholarship to lose, by changing his or her registration status, the student will lose his or her priority for teaching and research assistant contracts. The change of status also means that students suddenly have to start paying back their OSAP loans. This in return requires the student to obtain full-time employment, which in turn can cause the student to be unable to complete his or her studies in a timely manner (in the humanities, the fact that students have to work after their funding ends often contributes to failure to complete). In the meantime, in many programs the student is occupying one of the professor’s supervisory slots, which means that the professor cannot accept a new student. Thus, what appears to be a simple matter of registration status quickly becomes one of scholarships, employment, likelihood of success, and even of recruitment and thesis supervision.

In this context, the Working Group’s recommendation to dismantle the academic structure of FGPS, to disperse its skilled personnel into other units that deal with similar issues for undergraduate students, to incorporate quality assurance with undergraduate studies and to divide the scholarship office between financial aid and the Office of the Vice-President Research will make the managing of graduate students files more difficult and almost impossible to co-ordinate. Conversations that currently take place between people managing different parts of the student’s file, but who are in the same office will, under the Working Group’s plan,
Minority Report for the Working Group studying the operations of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (FGPS)

Minority Report for the Working Group studying the operations of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (FGPS)

involve different units and even be under different Vice-Presidents. It will also dilute and ultimately destroy the single most important resource that the University has for ensuring quality and student satisfaction in graduate studies and for supporting the faculties in their academic decision-making: that is, a highly skilled specialized unit with experienced personnel who understand all aspects of graduate studies from recruitment through graduation. As noted earlier, even the University of Waterloo, which is the most decentralized university in the U15 in terms of the management of graduate studies, still has an Office of Graduate Studies that carries out many of the same functions as the Operations Sector of FGPS including responsibilities for admissions, for registration, for scholarships and for the cyclical evaluation of graduate of programs. Perhaps most importantly, the division of central responsibility for graduate studies into different offices, as times even under different vice-presidents, will likely add to the frustration of students and of the home faculty and administrators trying to support as they have to deal with multiple, independent and uncoordinated bureaucracies, rather than with a single central entity as currently. Even if this transition goes smoothly, it will adversely affect student satisfaction as a result.

Similarly, the Working Group’s recommendation to replace the existing Faculty structure with an Associate Vice-President for graduate studies who would chair the Humanities and Science Commissions reduces the current academic decision-making of the Dean and the Council of the FGPS to an advisory role only. The Council of FGPS is the standing committee of Senate that is mandated to oversee “the operation of graduate programs and of postdoctoral training for the University as a whole and, in close collaboration with the other faculties, [the Council] develops regulations and policies aimed at ensuring an optimal graduate student and postdoctoral fellow experience.” It is the committee on which all faculties are represented through the vice-deans responsible for graduate studies. It also includes representation from the Office of the Vice-President Research, from St. Paul University, as well as of the program directors and students. For graduate studies, it is the equivalent of the Committee on Undergraduate Studies. The Working Group is silent on what structure will replace this group. Rather, it suggests that the AVP Graduate Studies will chair the two commissions, which have advisory roles only. As such, the Working Group is proposing that the central authority for graduate studies in the University have no powers of academic decision-making. Since quality assurance will be placed under the AVP Academic, this authority will have no role in quality assurance either. Thus, at a time when the Faculties are asking for greater input into the central decision-making process in graduate studies, the Working Group is in effect, proposing to completely eliminate their role in this decision making.

The decision to create an Associate Vice-President for graduate studies further dismantles the University’s capacity to meet the current challenges. Currently, the Dean of Graduate Studies not only chairs the Council and Executive Committee of FGPS, he is also a member of the College of Deans, the Committee of the Central Administration and Deans, of the Vice-President Academic’s Preparatory Committee for the Central Administration, and by tradition is elected to the Joint Committee of Senate and Board of Governors. The new AVP will have limited contact with the Deans, which means that that the ability of the University to nourish the networked collegial discussions between the central administration and the faculties will be inhibited (associate vice-presidents generally have limited contact with the Deans). Graduate Studies will no longer be represented at the CA-Deans Committee. There will be no organized structure that enables on-going conversations between the AVP and the Vice-Deans of Graduate Studies. The occupant of the position will have no authority to develop such things as recruitment plans to meet the Destination 2020 targets or to coordinate activities, including cyclical evaluations of graduate programs, to ensure that persons with disabilities are accommodated in graduate studies. He or she will have no authority over the staff who deal with graduate studies matters or individual cases and instead will need to approach them through third parties such as the registrar, the VP Research, the Director of Financial Aid, or the head of the Teaching Learning Support Service. Discussions that today take minutes will take days and months. Decisions that

are taken by the Dean, and the Vice-Dean and Associate Dean of FGPS currently will need to be taken by committees, which will create further delays and provide less rather than greater accountability.

The dismantling of the General Regulations of the FGPS is implicit in the Working Group's key recommendations. While it is certainly true that students should feel attached to their home program and unit, the fact that they are under the jurisdiction of a central unit such as graduate studies is essential to protecting their interests. When everything goes right in graduate studies, this overlapping jurisdiction is not needed. When things go wrong it is essential. Here I note that the AVP Academic has no authority over what happens within undergraduate programs other than through the periodic evaluations of graduate studies. The new AVP Graduate Studies will not even have this authority. By contrast, the Dean of Graduate Studies does have the right to call individual programs or supervisors to account, because the students and their supervisors are in the FGPS. This calling to account is an everyday process that involves constant back and forth between the FGPS and the faculty Graduate Offices, between the Dean of FGPS and the Vice-Deans of Graduate Studies, and between FGPS and individual students and professors. It is only in the most extreme cases that such matters come to involve the faculty deans. This calling to account is vital to ensuring the quality of graduate programs in terms of their everyday decision-making. For example, the Student Appeals Service of GSAÉD and SFUO will be aware of decisions made in cases in different faculties on the basis of similar facts. On appeal, the student will win in cases where another program or faculty made a different decision. In effect, the danger in the proposal to completely dismantle the FGPS structure is that the lowest common denominator in terms of quality will over time become the default position.

Accreditation of Professors

The Working Group is proposing to eliminate the current system of accrediting graduate faculty. Having spent the last two years managing the FGPS membership system, I am the first to admit that it involves a lot of bureaucratic detail for limited return on ensuring quality supervision. However the proposal to completely eliminate this system is ill-informed. Under the Ontario Universities Council for Quality Assurance, for a graduate course to count as a graduate course, among other things, “institutionally-approved graduate faculty” must teach it. If we have no system for providing such approval, potentially none of our graduate programs will meet the quality assurance standards. There also needs to be a system that makes clear that professors do not have an automatic right to supervise graduate students, but that graduate students by contrast have a right to be properly supervised. In effect, a small number of professors need to be prevented from supervising. If the system of membership is eliminated, establishing and changing a professor’s supervisory privileges is no longer going to be under the academic regulations of Senate. Rather, it will be under the labour-relations regulations of the APUO collective agreement. Among other things, the proposed change will require re-opening the collective agreement. Once again, the elimination of the Council of FGPS means that the body that decides on the criteria for membership in FGPS will disappear.

The proposal for a new system designed to help deans manage their professors’ supervision of thesis students will certainly help to ensure the encadrement of students and their supervisors. However, in practice, the capacity of faculties to develop this encadrement is uneven to say the least. Leaving aside the fact that, as the former Dean of FGPS Gary Slater told the Working Group, individual deans have in the past been reluctant to interfere with their colleagues’ supervision of graduate students, different faculties have different capacities to monitor and even to understand the requirements for quality supervision. For example, the rapid expansion

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of graduate studies in the Faculties of Engineering and Social Sciences has strained both the resources needed to support students and units’ capacities to ensure first-rate thesis supervision for all students. Although both faculties are currently building these supports, it will be some time before they can ensure the highest standards across the board. The Telfer School of Management will shortly be offering a PhD program for the first time. This presents the School with significant management challenges. The PhD involves a very different and longer commitment from both students and supervisors than is the case in the School’s existing master’s programs. Even in the Faculties of Arts, Science and Education, which have established cultures of PhD supervision, supervisors and programs need to be made aware of the new realities facing graduate education, the challenges of supporting more diverse student populations and the changing employment possibilities of graduates. Every faculty also faces tremendous challenges in providing the resources needed to support graduate studies and to ensure the encadrement of supervisors. All of this will be a significant additional burden for deans, unless they have the support of central systems in providing needed information, in highlighting best practices and at times to initiate the close examination of specific professors’ supervision.

Experience at almost every other university as well as our own has shown that ensuring quality supervision of theses requires multifaceted approaches, involving local as well as central lines of accountability. In fact, the issue needs communication and development among and between the deans, among the vice-deans, the program directors within and across faculties, even among individual professors, all with the support of those who can see the entire university in its functioning, including best practices and what has been learned from the cases that have gone badly wrong. Yet, the report proposes abolishing the very structures that allow this multifaceted conversation to take place. The new Associate Vice-President would not be a member of College of Deans. This will make it very difficult to enable the ongoing conversation that is needed between the central administration and the deans to develop the resources that they need. The report implicitly calls for abolishing the Council of FGPS on which the Vice-Deans of Graduate Studies sit. This too removes the structure that enables the necessary discussions. Finally its proposal that the Commissions of Science and Humanities on which the program directors sit be chaired by the AVP will inhibit the collegial discussions that are now possible between program directors and the Commission Presidents who as regular professors do not report to the Provost.
Making Central Services Responsive to Graduate Students

Although we have made much progress in creating more user-friendly services, uOttawa is generally behind in providing adequate services when it comes to graduate students. Few of the University’s central services account for the particularity of graduate studies. For example, the Financial Resources recently ended the system that allowed graduate students to pay their fees incrementally with deductions from their Teaching and Research Assistantships. They made this decision without consulting the Executive Committee or Council of FGPS. Unanimous resolutions of the Humanities and Science Commissions and of the Council of FGPS have protested this decision because it means that some students will not be able to continue their studies and that the costs in terms of loss of BIUs will likely outweigh the administrative savings of an admittedly difficult program to administer. In another example, if we want to attract more graduate students, we absolutely need family housing for students with children. Montreal is a more attractive city for unattached twenty-somethings, and U of T has more resources for scholarships, but Ottawa is one of the best places in the world to raise children. Graduate students have needs that differ from undergraduates due to such things as their age, their emotional and financial investments, and the complexities of their studies. As mentioned earlier, like other groups of special students such as students with disabilities, international studies, as well as First Nations, Inuit and Métis students, graduate students need specialized support services different from those of other students. A strong and powerful advocate for graduate studies at the centre of the University is not enough to ensure that services become graduate-student friendly. This advocacy must be informed by and interlinked through systems of academic governance to the realities that students face in their programs and in their progress. The new structure proposed by the Working Group will mean that specialized services for graduate students will disappear. This means that their problems will be less likely to be resolved quickly and effectively, which will in turn damage the University’s reputation, its ability to recruit and will make lawsuits more likely.

The further development of the University’s capacity to address the issue of ensuring that graduate students can use their degrees in productive ways is also linked to developing academic governance. Although Altitude is recognized as one of the best programs of its kind in Ontario, as the cyclical evaluation of graduate programs has shown, it needs further development. Students need advice on these issues at the level of their specific program, and the programs need central support in building their systems to ensure the future success of their graduates. Establishing central regulations and requirements alone are insufficient to ensuring this success unless an academic network shapes it by building and supporting the diverse parts throughout the institution. Here again, our efforts need to be informed by best practices elsewhere. For example, Carleton University has recently hired a career counselor whose sole task is to counsel PhD students on the entire range of career options. When informed by academic decision-making and networks, great possibilities emerge. The FGPS in partnership with the U15 universities in Ontario plus Guelph recently developed a series of 18 on-line professional development modules for graduate students and postdocs. The project, which will be publicly launched in September, has attracted interest from other universities around the world including UC Berkeley. The Working Group’s proposal here is to separate the provision of such services from the academic decision-making and discussions needed to develop them by placing Altitude under the TLSS and removing the authority over the program of the central advocate for graduate studies.

More than ever, we need a strong central unit that is part of a system of academic and collegial governance that works closely with the faculties and allied services to ensure that the various parts of the University function in support of building graduate studies and in establishing the University’s reputation for unparalleled success in graduate education. Rather than strengthening this capacity, the restructuring proposed in the draft report weakens it.
Making Central Services Responsive to Graduate Students

Since the *University of Ottawa Act* provides that it is Senate alone that can abolish a faculty, the changes being sought in this report will require the approval of Senate. Presenting a sweeping change of this nature can only succeed at Senate if it represents a high degree of consensus within the various constituents of the University. The Working Group does not have sufficient evidence that there is such a consensus or that the proposed changes will not be controversial.

One of the best ways of building consensus is to ensure that processes for peer-review nourish changes. Recently the University put in place mechanisms for the peer-review of Faculties. Prior to making any changes to FGPS, it is essential that it establish a peer-review panel of experts in graduate studies from outside the University to closely examine what FGPS does and to make recommendations on how best to position the University to continue to build its strengths in graduate studies.

Finally, there is another way to achieve the objective of a more agile and responsive system for managing graduate studies while ensuring quality, containing risks and even helping to build the University’s research profile. This way would build consensus by drawing on the combined expertise, knowledge and desire for first-rate graduate education of those who are engaged in the day-to-day management of graduate studies both within the FGPS and within the faculties. Louise Lemyre’s proposal for a College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies headed by a Dean/Vice-Provost Graduate Studies and by the faculty vice-deans of graduate studies, a proposal also made by some of the faculty vice-deans, is one such mechanism. In creating this College, this management team made up of those who understand graduate studies from the point of view of all of the University’s constituent parts, should be given the mandate to research, analyze and think through the various challenges before us. In particular, it should be tasked to determine:

1. How to better respond to the changing nature of graduate education and the needs of graduate students;
2. How to ensure better integration between graduate and postdoctoral studies at the centre and within the faculties;
3. How to ensure that all specialized central services are responding to the needs of graduate students;
4. How to build cultures of continuous improvement in graduate studies throughout the university, including improved capacity for thesis supervision;
5. How to position graduate studies in the University to achieve the *Destination 2020* targets;
6. How to link the development of graduate studies with the development of research in the humanities as well as the sciences.

As the combined initiative of the faculties and of the central authorities, such a mechanism would build consensus, educate the broader university community on the challenges before us, and harness our combined energies towards the optimization of the graduate student experience at the University of Ottawa.
My Recommendations:

1. That the recommendations of the Working Group be put on hold until such time that the study of the governance of FGPS by the FGPS Council is completed. This study by the people who deal with the realities of graduate studies on a day-to-day basis should focus in detail on how to make existing processes more efficient without sacrificing quality, while also positioning graduate studies to meet the strategic objectives of Destination 2020, including improving the quality of student experience, promoting bilingualism and internationalization as well as building the University’s research culture. The study must also ensure closer integration of the home faculties into the central leadership and development of graduate studies, including updating its modes of academic governance;

2. That whatever changes are made to the central governance of graduate studies, the operational staff of FGPS be kept together as administrative unit;

3. That whoever is responsible for graduate studies centrally remain a member of the CA-Deans and of the College of Deans, and have executive authority over the central graduate studies staff.

4. That during this period of transition, the FGPS continue its efforts to update its regulations governing thesis defences, membership and quality assurance.

Appendices

Appendices are available on demand and in the language in which they were submitted. Please contact the Office of Vice-President Academic and Provost, vpacademic@uOttawa.ca