

TO: UPEI Senate

FROM: Marva Sweeney-Nixon, Chair, Graduate Studies Advisory Committee (GSAC)

DATE: March 3, 2025

RE: Annual report of GSAC

The **mandate** of the Graduate Studies Advisory Committee (GSAC) is to further the mission of UPEI in the pursuit of excellence in graduate studies and to report to the UPEI Senate on Graduate Studies issues, trends, and initiatives. The **composition** of the GSAC supports this mandate with representatives drawn from each faculty administering graduate-level program(s), typically via their respective Graduate Studies Coordinator/Associate Dean of Graduate Studies. Other members include key stakeholders in the delivery of graduate-level studies, and direct representation of graduate students via the President of the Graduate Students Association, and a Postdoctoral Scholar representative. The committee is Chaired by the Associate Vice-President Research and Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS), presently Dr. Marva Sweeney-Nixon.

Current committee members:

Veterinary Medicine: Laurie McDuffee	Education: Ken MacKinnon
Science: Chris Power	Business: Tina Saksida
Graduate Student Association: Osagie Atomon	Nursing: Gail McCartney
Arts: Laurie Brinklow	Engineering: Trung Ngo
Library: Donald Moses	Registrar's Office: Darcy McCardle
Post-doctoral Representative: Raheleh Malekian	

Regular guests from Faculty of Graduate Studies include Kendra Mellish (Graduate Programs Officer) & Susie Zavala (Cleantech Program Manager). Gratefully acknowledged is the administrative support provided by Colleen Gallant, Administrative Assistant, FGS.

In 2024, the full GSAC met regularly (monthly) in person to conduct its work, with **key activities** from its mandate over the period of March 2024 to 2025 including:

1- Provide guidance and context and serve as a resource to the Senate and to the AVPR/Dean, FGS on institutional-level issues concerning graduate studies at UPEI.

Spanning multiple meetings was in-depth discussion in preparation for the changes implemented by Immigration, Refugee, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) extending the requirement for Provincial Attestation Letters (PAL) for international graduate-level students and the associated tuition deposit requirements. GSAC assessed the anticipated impacts to UPEI graduate academic and research programs, identified the target number of PALs to be reserved for graduate applicants, and successfully advocated for a revised set of international tuition deposits to reflect the differences in course-based (\$3000) and research-thesis based (\$1000) graduate programs. Amended admissions workflows to add PAL steps were introduced and feedback incorporated.

A sub-committee of GSAC has been working with the Registrar's Office tasked with renewal of the overarching Graduate Academic Regulations. It is anticipated that the majority of the regulations will be revised to better align with current practice and process.

2- Reviewing and revising general Graduate Studies components of the Academic Calendar & Developing strategies for graduate student recruitment and program growth.

* With the suspension of the Graduate English Academic Preparation (GEAP) program, GSAC critically discussed the suitability of the graduate English language proficiency requirements,

adjustments to the definition of Conditional Admission on the basis of language proficiency, and the necessity of access to the UPEI English Language Centre's supplemental language testing for graduate applicants.

* The critical importance of targeted recruitment for graduate programs has been discussed, with focused recruitment on current UPEI undergraduate students and increasing domestic student recruiting. With leadership from FGS, UPEI's Communications and Marketing team has been engaged to develop targeted marketing material promoting graduate programs, with special focus on graduate study opportunities in Education & Island Studies. A key tool in recruitment is providing competitive funding and scholarship packages for prospective graduate students, something that UPEI needs to improve upon.

*Members of GSAC met with a QA review committee tasked with a review of UPEI Graduate Studies Admissions.

3- *Establishing application procedures (and terms of reference where needed) for both internal and external graduate scholarships and funding opportunities, and application adjudication as appropriate.*

Successful advocacy by the Dean, FGS, secured some graduate student tuition (above revenue targets) as the foundation of funds for establishing a graduate student fellowship program. GSAC discussed the important considerations for establishing a fellowship fund based on the units' current admission practices, provided feedback on various potential models, and ultimately endorsed the model: 70% of graduate student tuition for research-thesis students for fellowships, and 70% of graduate student tuition for course-based students returned to the home unit for student focused initiatives. As in previous years, GSAC reviewed several graduate scholarship applications.

4- *Reviewing graduate program proposals to provide feedback, advice and guidance*

The new interdisciplinary Masters in Cleantech Leadership and Transformation, to be housed in FGS, was presented to GSAC at varying intervals for feedback as it progressed through the internal UPEI approvals processes and external MPHEC processes. The program is slated for UPEI Senate full approval at the March 14, 2025 Senate meeting, as it received full approval from MPHEC in January 2025.

The Faculty of Nursing presented to GSAC their proposed revised Master of Nursing, with a revised version of their Thesis stream, and introducing a course-based stream. Feedback was provided to inform the proposals as they progress through the internal and external review bodies.

This has been a year of pressures imposed externally, and GSAC has worked to maintain stability and promote excellence within graduate programs at UPEI. Respectfully submitted,

Mawa Sweeney Dixon