

**MINUTES OF GENERAL MEETING
THE GRADUATE ENGLISH SOCIETY
WESTERN UNIVERSITY
March 4, 2016**

Call to Order: The second general meeting of the 2015-16 academic year, held in AHB 1B06, was called to order by Caroline Diezyn at 1:45 p.m.

Attendees: Erin Akerman, Madison Bettle, Adam Bowes, Caroline Diezyn, David Huebert, Ian Hynd, Lori Maddigan, Megan O'Hara, Jaclyn Reed, Logan Rohde, Heather Stephenson, Lisa Templin, Kate Trail

Regrets: Emily Kring (Union Steward), Kristen Niles (Social Coordinator), Diana Samu-Visser (Treasurer), Tom Stuart (Academic Coordinator)

Proceedings

1. The Agenda was approved without amendments.
2. The Minutes of the meeting of October 15, 2015 were approved as circulated.
3. Report from GES Co-Chairs (Diezyn):
 - a. English Department Meeting of February 25, 2016 – all grad students are welcome to attend department meetings.
 - b. CGS Meeting of February 29, 2016 – the committee agreed to a recommendation made by GES to discontinue providing number grades for comprehensive exams; the officially recorded result of fail, pass, or pass with distinction will be provided to the student without a numerical grade. This recommended policy change is yet to be approved by SGPS.
 - c. Colloquium Workshop of March 4, 2016 – a workshop to initiate discussion on implementing a system of program outcomes, rather than course outcomes, for undergraduate studies in the English Department. Grad students should attend future workshops and meetings to ensure that changes take into account feedback from Teaching Assistants.
 - d. Graduate Office Space and Writing Sessions – the 'book sale' room (AHB 2G28N) has been configured to accommodate grad students requiring space to work (esp. Year X students who have no allocated office space). The space will also be used for weekly writing sessions held Wednesdays from 10:00 – noon, recently initiated by Meghan Adams. Donations of bar stools for the stand-up work area are welcome, as are donations of extension cords. The Anti-Lounge behind the new work area will be equipped today with a table, kettle and Keurig machine, and shortly with a couch, fridge and microwave.
4. Notice of Motions:

a. It was moved by Caroline and seconded by Kate that a new bylaw (3.3.7) be added as follows:
Ensure a carry-over amount in the treasury of at least \$300 for the following scholastic year.
MOTION CARRIED

b. It was moved by Caroline and seconded by Ian that a new bylaw (3.2.18) be added as follows:
Each member of the executive shall write a transition manual and provide it to the corresponding incoming executive member upon their election. The transition manual will include a year-end report of all activity as well as any pertinent contacts and timelines. The transition manuals shall be archived among the GES documents.
MOTION CARRIED

5. Report from Treasurer (Diezyn in Samu-Visser's absence): Current ending balance in the fund is \$1026.92. Lessons learned from book sales (e.g. timing) will be taken in consideration for next year's book sale(s).

6. Report from Social Coordinator (Diezyn in Niles' absence):

a. Year-end party – The event will be held in late April and will include an off-campus activity followed by food and drinks at the Grad Club.

b. Other activities – The Social Coordinator is considering a summer event(s). Grad students with ideas for activities (summer or otherwise) should notify Kristen.

7. Report from Academic Coordinator (Diezyn in Stuart's absence):

Colloquium Series – The monthly series did not make it off the ground. Tom is working with Professor Phu to plan a 1-2 day conference instead. Details to follow. Jackie suggested the idea of a year-end round-table where students could present papers; this is also being considered. Madison reminded the committee that SOGS provides some funding for Western grad conferences.

8. Report from SOGS (Bettle):

a. SOGS Initiatives – Fall Thesis Writers Retreat and Thesis Writing Program; Spring Thesis Writers Retreat to be held in April; Awarded \$75,253 in subsidies and added \$10,000 for next year; New travel subsidy added for field work expenses; Passed a motion to recognize students on leave of absence as continuing SOGS members for benefits, etc.; Improved focus on graduate wellness.

b. Meeting with President (Chakma) and Provost/Vice President (Deakin) – issues raised include tuition reduction for year x students; funding; create more grad student space and eliminate occupancy fee for Grad Club; recognize diversity of grad students and their distinction from undergrad students; leverage community ties to access alternative revenue streams.

c. A&H Grad Associations – of 8 departments, 4 have associations; of those only 2 have websites and only GES actively uses/updates its website; GES is also the only association with designated space.

- d. Discussed Queens University's grad student life program which is called "Habitat". Madison is looking at this program as a model to develop a robust grad student life program for GES and is seeking volunteers to assist on a GES "Habitat" Ad-hoc Committee. Program pillars include Wellness, Academics, Professional Development, Arts & Entertainment, and Managing (finances, housing, families, etc.).

ACTION ITEM: ALL – contact Madison if you are interested in being on the "Habitat" Committee.

9. New business:

- a. Comprehensive Examinations – the new structure and schedule effective this year under which students complete course work and prepare for qualifying exams concurrently was discussed at length.

ACTION ITEM: LORI – gather additional feedback from PhD 1 students and provide to GES co-chairs and Madison.

- b. David H. reported that the Visiting Speakers Committee has brought in only one speaker (Michael Clune) this year, in part due to budget constraints. The Committee is seeking input from students regarding future speakers of interest, with the goal of ensuring good attendance at such events (although the Clune event was well-attended, this has not always been the case with previous speakers).
- c. David H. noted that teaching opportunities for PhD students in the English Department at Western are limited. Members noted that at some schools, grad students are required to design an undergraduate course syllabus in lieu of comprehensive exams, and later have the opportunity to teach the course they designed. Concern was also expressed regarding a lack of uniformity across teaching assistant assignments resulting in, sometimes significant, differences in the level of teaching experience TAs receive in comparison to each other.

ACTION ITEM: CAROLINE AND ADAM – initiate a conversation with CGS to address this matter.

- d. David H. plans to continue his summer fire-pit reading series and asked if the GES would treat this as a GES event (invitations, Facebook event, etc.). Caroline confirmed that the GES is pleased to treat this as a GES event; other social activities that can be coordinated through the GES are welcome (movie nights, etc.). Members should contact Kristen with ideas.

10. ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, Caroline declared the meeting adjourned by unanimous consent.

Meeting adjourned at 3:50 p.m.