



GRADUATE STUDENTS' UNION
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
LOCAL 19, CANADIAN FEDERATION OF STUDENTS

Minutes of GSU Council, 24 November, 2003

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Agenda:

- [1] MPhil Proposal: Guest: Prof. B. Katz
- [2] (a) Agenda
- (b) Roll call
- (c) Minutes
- (d) Business Arising from the Minutes
- (e) Course Union Reports
- (f) OPIRG Report
- [3] Report of the Canadian Federation of Students AGM
- [4] Focus Committee Reports
- [5] Items for Information
 - (a) Housing
 - (b) White Paper
 - (c) Breaking Down the Barriers
- [6] Tuition Fee Campaign
- [7] Executive and Staff Reports
- [8] Reports (Governing Council/SGS/CUPE 3902)
- [9] Falun Gong Motion
- [10] Other Business

Attachments:

- <1> Items included in Council mailing and meeting
- <2> Rollcall

Meeting Commenced at 6:10pm.

Mahadeo Sukhai told the Council that as Vice-Chair, he would act as Chair for this meeting, and expressed the regrets of Chair Kristen Beard.

[1] Guest: Prof. B. Katz

- Professor Bernard Katz (Associate-Dean, Graduate Studies, Division I [Humanities]) presented the MPhil proposal.
 - MPhil degrees are awarded at many peer institutions, but U of T is not considering it based on this, but rather based on its academic merit.
 - The proposal is to give students who are “ABD” (all but dissertation) a degree.
 - MPhil would be useful both for people with and without an MA – it indicated substantially more work than an MA.
 - People who never finish a PhD program would receive some recognition of their work.

- The proposal is student friendly and student driven – if the GSU membership doesn't support the proposal, then Professor Katz would not want to proceed.
- Question: How do we ensure recognition of this degree and acceptance of the degree in Canada?
 - Professor Katz replied that the degree will require some learning in the community, but the requirements will be clearly defined. We are not the first institution to do this, but we will lead the way in Canada. Other Canadian schools will likely follow suit.
- Question: Why is this proposal brought forward now?
 - Professor Katz replied that he has been pushing this proposal for the last 4 years, and change is slow. The last year there has been much progress.
- Question: If a student gets an MPhil, can they continue and receive their PhD?
 - Professor Katz clarified that the MPhil is awarded to all students, both continuing or those who wish to leave.
- Question: Will the degree be offered to all PhD students, or only direct-entry?
 - Professor Katz replied that he personally wishes it to be offered to all PhD students. The issue has to be resolved by the SGS Council.
- Question: Individual departments are discussing this proposal. If some departments do not approve this, how will the degree be considered legitimate?
 - There is support in Division I and Division II, but opposition from Division IV.
 - In Division IV people claim that this might discredit the MSc degree. Professor Katz believes awarding this to all students (with MSc and without) would alleviate this concern, as students with MSc would have two Masters degrees. Some departments do not have a clear distinction point at which an MPhil could be awarded.
 - There is nothing illegitimate about departments doing things differently – it already happens all the time.
- Question: Will this be decided by individual departments?
 - Yes – departments will make a program change request to SGS Divisional executive and SGS council as is currently the process.
- A member mentioned that this is already the practice in the UK
- Question: What is the cost of this proposal? Will degrees be rewarded retroactively?
 - The costs will be only administrative costs – changes to ROSI, etc. Ongoing administrative costs will be negligible – the degree check is already carried out on all students.
 - The degree would be awarded in absentia – there will be no convocation or diploma.
 - The degree will be retroactive in that students currently in programs, or recently lapsed, will likely be awarded the degree. SGS Council will still have to approve this.
- Question: Since the MPhil is for students en route to their PhD degree? If people do not finish PhD, won't the MPhil be seen as a "failed PhD"?
 - If students do not finish a program, it does not discredit the MA or MSc. Why would the existence of MPhil discredit anything? If there is any discredit, it will be that the student didn't finish the PhD – but without MPhil, they would not have any degree. This will not be awarded to students who are essentially pushed out of the program due to unsatisfactory progress; it is not a consolation prize. Having an additional degree cannot hurt people.
- Question: How does the MPhil help people in the Humanities?
 - People have to apply for positions before finishing their degree, so having this milestone will recognize their progress.

Executive Motion:

BIRT the GSU support the MPhil proposal.
Carried (Opposed: Mark Szczerba (UTSC))