

## York Graduate Students in Education (YGSE)

**Meeting: Wednesday November 15, 2023 at 11.30am via Zoom**

### **ATTENDING:**

Sheetal Prasad (Co-Chair), Esther Martinez (Co-chair), Lisa Smith, Aurra Startup, Shayna Brissett-Foster, Helen Liu, Marika Kunnas, Chloe Jones-Westgarth, Chunlei Liu, Mercedes Veselka, Emina Gladstone, Ryan Collis, Ellie Van Berkel, Sonia Martin, Stella Kim

### **MINUTES OF MEETING**

1. Call to Order - Meeting called to order by the Co-Chairs at 11.40am.
2. Land Acknowledgement
3. Roll Call by secretary.
4. Vote on the agenda, approved by Aurra and seconded by Marika. Motion carried
5. Approval of previous minutes from October 4 and October 18 - accepted as is unless there was an objection. No objections were raised.
6. Chair's remarks
  - **a) Grad Exec Meeting**

Meetings occurred on October 24 and 14 November 2023.  
Good turnout for the October date including members of faculty and some BEd students curious to find out about the MEd.  
The TA issue was brought up at the October meeting. Although the GPD was told that everything was "good to go" this does not seem to have been the case as 3 students are still waiting for assignments apparently and offer letters override CUPE deadlines.  
The faculty is currently running with a deficit, one member of Faculty suggested that closure of the grad program might be a possible solution.  
There will be changes to the dissertation format in 2024/25 and as per the November meeting these will be on the FGS website.  
Proposal exam: formalized and submitted to FGS, in writing and clearer format  
Degree milestones with 4 formats for the 2024/25 year: monograph, manuscript-based, complex digital and multimodal  
Comprehensive exams - approval in Grad Assembly in December  
Possible introduction of a one-year MA program, course only due to costs and students looking for quick completion - more information to follow in December.  
GPD looking at doing bi-weekly check-ins  
Grad Assembly on December 6, 2023
  - **b) Indigenous Cohort Rep resignation**

The Indigenous Cohort Representative resigned from the position.  
Key reasons for the decision were put into an email to the Co-Chairs. A summary of these were shared (with permission) during the meeting.  
Appreciation that this helped to map out possible directions to build more decolonial approach in the future
7. Announcements

A signed Constitution Agreement Form is still outstanding from some people and should be returned to Lisa. Thank you to those who have returned their copy already.

## Constitution Agreement Form

8. By-elections  
One position – The UIC Position.
9. Reports from Officers
  - a) Executive
  - **i) Secretary**  
As mentioned in 7) above, please return the Constitution Agreement Form if you have not already done so. Thank you!  
It would be useful to have an email with information about all the standing committees.  
**Action:** Secretary to send out an email giving information about all the standing committees
  - **ii) Treasurer's Report**  
The Dean's office have not yet reimbursed for the YGSE Meet & Greet. **Action:** Aurra to monitor.  
Treasurer has access to the bank account, with ability to complete transfers and reimbursements  
The OGF fund has been submitted to YUGSA  
Bursaries: There is a line in the budget for bursaries. A motion to create a committee chaired by the Treasurer to come up with the rules and process for the bursary process in 2023/24. Approved by Sonia and seconded by Lisa. Motion carried
  - **iii) Equity & Communications Coordinators**  
The coordinators now have access to the YGSE Equity email.  
Only one response to the call for people to make up the Equity Committee  
Point raised that we have a number of committees and that likely volunteers might be stretched or waiting for the right opportunity to take part  
The two Coordinators can still work together to make equity decisions for YGSE and take things forward even without a full committee  
After the resignation of the Indigenous Cohort Rep and the points raised, we should look at indigenous ways of being and how we can decolonize the way YGSE operates. The way in which Robert's rules can be rather restrictive was pointed out and might be worth further discussion  
Meeting planned for November 29th with opportunity to discuss points raised by the Indigenous Cohort Representative. All members of the Council are welcome if they are available. **Action** Secretary to send out email on behalf of the Equity & Communications Coordinators. Post meeting note: this has been sent out.  
**Action:** Equity & Communications Coordinators to figure out way to foster a better relationship with the Indigenous groups on campus.  
**Action:** Everyone to make a note of the key issues shared in the document originating from the resignation of the Indigenous Cohort Representative and bring ideas/ suggestions to the next meeting in January. The intention is that the self-reflection will lead to actionable items
  - **iv) Community & Professional Development Coordinators**  
No points raised.
  - b) Associates
  - **i) Chief Returning Officer**  
One vacancy.

- **ii) Urban Indigenous Cohort Representative**  
Position vacant due to resignation.
- **iii) Dadaab Cohort Representative**  
No further reports as the program has been disbanded.
- **iv) Graduate Conference Coordinators**  
From earlier discussions, there could be an Indigenous Symposia as part of the conference and perhaps part of the conference could be held off-site/out of the university.  
Aiming to put out a second call for people to participate in the conference (in any capacity), with 3-4 people currently interested after the first call for volunteers  
Will be looking for reviewers with training covered as part of the process, opportunity to coordinate with the Journal perhaps.  
The conference should be in mid to late May, with a tentative theme of 'Taboo'. Very positive feedback received on this.  
Meeting planned for November 24th, all ideas and suggestions welcome. **Action:** Secretary will send out a reminder email on behalf of the Conference Coordinators  
Call for abstracts likely to go out at the end of November  
Suggestion: would the GPD/Conference Coordinators be able to pop into class(es) to talk about this, as it might lead to increased participation. Usually something for the start of the year, but might it be useful now?  
Additional point: do we need to look at how people best receive notifications about events, YGSE news?
- **v) Journal Managing Editor**  
Information about the 2024 Open Call issue was sent out to other organizations like YCAR and Robarts.  
Journal Managing Editor met with Conference Coordinators to liaise on deadlines  
2024 post-conference issue will be launched in November and Conference Coordinators will be sending out a call for abstracts.  
An organizational session on how to submit is planned soon.
- **vi) Graduate Lounge/Kitchen Manager**  
Drinks and snacks are now available in the lounge, the list is still up other suggestions/recommendations  
There has been a call for stationery supplies  
Costco run planned in the New Year  
Lockers: discussion about how long a locker can be booked for personal use and whether there should be a fee. Minimal fuss if there is a sign to say that lockers are used at own risk and should be emptied at the end of each day or the locks may be removed at owner's expense, together with contact information for the Graduate Lounge/Kitchen Manager. **Action:** Graduate Lounge/Kitchen Manager to draft and put up the signs.  
In the meantime, if anyone wants to use the lockers, please email the Graduate Lounge/Kitchen Manager
- **vii) YUGSA Representatives**  
The statement of October 12 was in response to a video from October 7. It was written and reviewed in haste (within 2-3 hours) and then published. Five members of the Exec were involved in the process. The VP of Equity resigned citing the rushed process and that her concerns were belittled.  
YGSE representatives had orientation prior to the meeting on October 19.  
Meeting on October 19 (4.30-11.00pm approx.), with significant pushback from many student councils. YUGSA Exec were to redraft the statement after consultation with

Jewish and Palestinian organizations on campus. After this it would be put forward for consultation with student faculty representatives

October 20, 2023, York University issued notification that they were not happy with the current situation and asked for a statement of clarification. Which did not happen.

YUGSA Exec have said that the current events with the university are based on unconfirmed actions dating back to 2019?

A statement was redrafted and sent out to all council members, who had time to review and provide amendments via email. Not all the amendments were added to the final statement, but it did go through several iterations.

A general feeling that any points raised/questions in YUGSA are answered very selectively and that many people were not happy with the answers provided

There will be a special meeting to approve various positions, this may be on Thursday November 16

Questions/comments to raise at the meeting:

\* The university asked the YUGSA Exec to a) resign or b) provide evidence that they had acted in accordance with specific regulations. Since a) hasn't happened, has b) taken place? At this time, no communication has been received on this matter.

\* The redrafted statement voted upon is not the same as the one sent out to students. How did this happen without proper approval and scrutiny?

\* Have the YUGSA Exec got any plans to address the ongoing tensions provoked by their statement? The understanding is that this is not their fault as it was due to the media and others misinterpreting the statement and so they have nothing to apologize for.

\* Bearing in mind that the PhD Town Hall raised the issue of safety on campus, can the point be raised that YUGSA should be taking action to make the campus atmosphere less divisive and have consideration to student well-being?

- **viii) CUPE 3903 Steward(s)**

There is a strike vote coming up in December (possibly 6-16 December). It is a two-step process as the strike cannot be called without a second vote.

It is very important to have a strong turnout and mandate for the strike vote so that the bargaining can be in good faith.

To boost support, they are looking to host a social get-together (in-person or on zoom) to present a slideshow for CUPE members with information about the process and to answer any questions. A budget for refreshments (\$50-\$100?) is available from CUPE.

To get an idea of numbers likely to come (in person), it might be good to have a registration process. If space is required, the graduate lounge may be available. **Action:** If required, CUPE Steward to liaise with Graduate Lounge/Kitchen Manager for room availability. **Action:** Secretary to send out an email drafted by the CUPE Steward inviting full-time PhD students to this event.

No updates on the TA situation (no response to emails sent or to a letter sent to the executive). Academic Programs said that they had no idea about the 4 contracts currently required for winter if the students do not contact them to point it out. It may be that the GPD has more information on this and can advise. There seems to be multiple students who do not have TA contracts for next semester, but there is no way of confirming this. **Action:** Everyone, if you know of any PhD students without contracts or with problematic contracts, could you ask them to contact the YGSE CUPE Steward. Cap for Taships dropped because cap for tutorials according to contract is actually in the 20s but is 12-15 in each section. **Action:** CUPE Steward to look into this

- **ix) FGS Representative**

- **x) PhD Representative**

PhD Town Hall event took place with a small turnout, a number of useful points raised.

Report produced and circulated during the meeting PhD Town Hall November 6. The points in the report need to be considered by YGSE with consideration of how i) safety and ii) equity issues are being tracked.

**Action:** Grad Exec Members to take these points to the next meeting on December 6th.

**Action:** PhD Representative to ask Teaching Commons about arrangements for TA Training

Also, discussion points to take back to YUGSA regarding safety on campus

**Action:** Everyone to consider the issues raised in the report and aim to provide a response in the YGSE January meeting

Another PhD Town Hall could be arranged for 2024, possibly February

- **xi) Graduate Mentorship Program Reps.**

- c) Committee Representatives

- **i) Faculty Council Representatives**

The Dean has said that the faculty is in deficit (\$4 million) due to the SHARP funding model used. There is no opportunity to see the books, even if requested.

Unconfirmed reports that the University has said that it is in deficit, but actually have untapped additional funding sources available. This may be used for forthcoming bargaining?

YUFA (faculty union) are looking at the possibility of strike action, which hasn't happened for over 20 years.

A faculty member suggested that cutting the graduate program might be one way of cutting costs. This did not get much traction, although undergrad students are seen as income and grad students are seen as a cost in the budget system if the university runs on a business model.

The point was made that York's reputation is not stellar and that if graduate programs are cut then it demonstrates that we're not following a good model and will be less likely to generate research and attract new students. Concern that there could be 'death by a thousand cuts'

The proposed one-year MA course would still come with funding. It doesn't seem to be like a Master of Teaching although the MLCE is about a year, nothing is known about the funding model used.

Potential changes to alleviate costs include a potential hiring freeze, the introduction of micro credentials (not a universally popular option), the number of international students could be increased to a maximum of 30% (not that popular with those present, but definitely seen as an option)

A reduction in the number of grad students with Full time MEd in 2024/25 numbers are 84 + 1 international student, for 2025/26 full time MEd anticipated numbers are 104 + 1 international student. Summer intake for MLCE is 20. All of these numbers are subject to change. PhD students in 2024/25 numbers are 17 + 1 international student, with the same for 2025/26, this is a reduction compared to previous years (about 23 students). Numbers and funding to be confirmed following the budget of December 6, 2023.

- **ii) CFRAG Representative**

Attended first meeting and the second one is coming up

The group is putting together various initiatives for development and to build awareness of what other people in the faculty are doing. Promoting opportunities where graduate students, particularly PhDs, can get involved

- **iii) Admissions Committee Representative**

- **iv) Hiring (TSAC) Representative**

- **v) Tenure & Promotions Committee Representative**  
Vacancies for three Assistant Professors have been posted  
There will be some training, and this will be organized by the Committee.  
No information about planned meeting dates/times. **Action:** Co-Chairs to update Kate Singh (Dean's office) with the contact information for ongoing meetings
  - **vi) C & P Representative**  
No meetings attended yet. **Action:** Co-Chairs to update Dean's office with the contact information for ongoing meetings
  - **vii) Anti-Black Racism Committee Representative.**
10. Meeting ended with no quorum at 1.38pm