

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY  
DEAN OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
MEMORANDUM

TO: Senate

FROM: Jonathan Driver, Dean of Graduate Studies  
Chair, Senate Graduate Studies Committee

SUBJECT: Frequency of Awarding Graduate Degrees (GS 2006.01)

DATE: February 10, 2006



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At its meeting of 16<sup>th</sup> January 2006 Senate Graduate Studies Committee approved in principle a policy and procedural change in the awarding of graduate degrees, provided that logistics can be resolved, and recommends the following motion to Senate for approval.

MOTION:

“that Senate approve in principle a change to the schedule for the awarding of graduate degrees so that graduate degrees may be awarded at any Senate meeting”

Rationale:

Most graduate degrees are completed when the thesis is submitted to the Library, and this can be at any time in the semester. The current policy is that graduate degree awards are submitted to Senate for approval at the beginning of Spring, Summer, and Fall semesters, many months after some students have completed all degree requirements. The new procedure would affect the date of degree completion recorded on student transcripts. This addresses some graduate students' wishes to have their completion recorded with minimal delay, for purposes such as career advancement and scholarship entitlement. The new process also facilitates registration procedures for students entering a doctoral program directly after completing a master's degree.

VALERIE ACKROYD  
DIRECTOR, GRADUATE  
ADMISSIONS, REGISTRATION &  
RECORDS  
8888 UNIVERSITY DRIVE  
BURNABY, BRITISH COLUMBIA  
CANADA V5A 1S6



Telephone (604) 291-3133  
Facsimile (604) 291-3080  
Email vackroyd@sfu.ca  
www.sfu.ca/dean-gradstudies

TO: Jonathan Driver  
FROM: Valerie Ackroyd, Director of Graduate Admissions & Records  
SUBJECT: GS2005.40 – rolling conferral of degrees  
DATE: December 15, 2005

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The following is my response to your memo of November 16<sup>th</sup> regarding the rolling conferral of degrees and the SGSC committee's questions regarding the proposal.

1. Faculties will still check that students have completed the degree requirements and sign the recommendation for award of degree forms.
2. Students can still delay convocation. This new option of early conferral would be available to the student at their choice; it would not be mandatory.
3. I don't know the answer regarding TSSU but my opinion is that as the contract is awarded before the semester begins and is for the entire semester, the student's completing early shouldn't affect the TSSU contract.
4. I contacted the University of Regina re their experience with visa students. Their response is as follows: "According to Immigration laws, the date the degree is awarded or the date of convocation are not the dates of completion of the program. The date of completion is when the student has completed all degree requirements and students have 90 days after completion of the degree requirements. If the student asks for the notation to be on the transcript that they completed in, say, September of 2006, then they have 90 days to remain in Canada before making further application to remain.
5. Student loans will be affected in that Financial Aid will have to report that the student completed early whereas, currently, they only report at the end of the semester. University of Regina said, however, that most students who apply for early completion want to minimize their indebtedness anyway and feel it more important to have their transcript updated.
6. Yes, students still apply to graduate.

Hope that helps and I will be at the next SGSC meeting to answer any further questions.

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DEAN OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
MEMORANDUM

TO: Valerie Ackroyd  
FROM: Jonathan Driver, Dean of Graduate Studies  
SUBJECT: GS2005.40 – rolling conferral of degrees  
DATE: 16<sup>th</sup> November 2005  
cc:

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SGSC discussed this proposal at its meeting of November 14<sup>th</sup>. In general the committee thinks this is a good idea. There were a number of questions raised that the committee would like answered before recommending this process to Senate:

1. Will faculties still get to check that students have completed the degree requirements, and sign the “recommendation for award of degree” form?
2. can students still delay convocation?
3. does this affect TSSU appointments, i.e. if a student is awarded the degree by Senate halfway through the semester, has their status as a student changed?
4. does this affect a student’s visa status?
5. does this affect student loans?
6. do students still have to apply to graduate?

If you could provide answers to these questions, I will bring your original document and your responses to the next SGSC meeting.



OFFICE OF THE DEAN OF  
GRADUATE STUDIES  
8888 UNIVERSITY DRIVE  
BURNABY, BRITISH COLUMBIA  
CANADA V5A 1S6



Telephone (604) 291-4255  
Facsimile (604) 291-3080  
Email [dgs-sfu@sfu.ca](mailto:dgs-sfu@sfu.ca)  
[www.sfu.ca/dean-gradstudies](http://www.sfu.ca/dean-gradstudies)

TO: Jon Driver, Dean, Graduate Studies

FROM: Valerie Ackroyd, Director of Graduate Admissions & Records

SUBJECT: Policy change to Calendar: Rolling Conferral of Degrees

DATE: October 24, 2005

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As you know, Simon Fraser currently awards degrees at the beginning of Spring, Summer and Fall semesters. As well, the candidate's name is only submitted to Senate for award if the candidate specifically applies to graduate. This has the following effects:

1. If a student completes all of the requirements for their degree early in the semester, their transcript does not reflect the fact until the following semester. This is problematic for students who need to demonstrate completion of degree for their advancement to a higher level degree or for scholarships.
2. If a student forgets to apply to graduate, their degree is not awarded. This means that a student may not have their completion row posted on their transcript until two or more semesters have passed.
3. As long as a student's program is not completed by awarding the degree, their program remains active. Therefore, if they apply at SFU for a higher level degree, for example, a PhD from a Masters and are matriculated into the next degree, their record may still show them as in their Masters program, thereby causing fee and enrolment problems.

Other universities have encountered similar problems and some have solved this problem by conferring graduate degrees each time that their Senate meets. This is not a difficult process to change administratively. Our office would follow the same procedures they currently do at the start of each semester, except that we would now do it at the beginning of each month that Senate meets. We would:

1. Collate all of the Recommendations of Award that we have received that month.
2. Check the library thesis submission list to ensure that the student's thesis was approved by the library. Alternately, for those programs that do not require a thesis submission, we would simply go to step 3.
3. Mark the thesis course as 'CO' and verify that the student did not have any other courses outstanding.
4. Set the student's degree status to 'approved'.
5. Submit the list of students in 'approved' status to Senate for awarding.

This proposal of course requires SGSC approval and Senate approval. Could you please discuss this at the next SGSC meeting?

Thank you!