

Dear Graduate Students,

This is to update you on a policy change approved yesterday by the Graduate Studies Executive Committee (GSEC), on times to completion in graduate programs.

In the past few days there has been considerable commentary regarding revision of the current regulation *Time Limits for Completion of Programs* (attached) and how any revised policy's implementation will affect current graduate students. The revised policy will come into effect at the start of the next academic year (September 2013). As is the usual practice when implementing policy changes that impact students who are currently registered in a Master's or PhD program, students are grandparented under the policies in place when they registered in their current program. This means that Master's students and doctoral students currently enrolled at Queen's will fall under the original policy (i.e. the policy in existence when they started their programs). It is the case, however, that all students must demonstrate satisfactory progress in their degree program to remain in good standing. This regulation has not changed.

Another point to clarify is that no 'hard limit' or 'cap' for degree completion is being imposed. The policy for *Time Limits for Completion of Programs*, acknowledges that while Master's and doctoral programs are designed and approved to allow completion within 2 and 4 years, respectively, there are many reasons why it might take longer (including, for example, required or voluntary internships, or extended archival or fieldwork requirements). Departments that deliver these programs understand this and the expectations of the discipline, which is why they have the authority to extend the limits by one year. Should further extensions be required, a request must be made to the School of Graduate Studies. Extenuating circumstances and longer time periods needed to accommodate students with disabilities are important considerations at both the Department and the SGS level, and will never be ignored.

As you are likely aware, either through your SGPS representatives on GSEC, student representatives on Faculty Graduate Councils, or graduate coordinators, this policy has been under discussion since October and has gone through several iterations based on feedback received from students and faculty members. The discussion has resulted in a policy that incorporates flexibility and will support our students in the goal of timely degree completion.

The SGS is committed to working with students, faculty supervisors and departments to foster an environment that supports a valuable graduate experience that includes timely degree completion. To succeed requires access to relevant and effective support services, good

supervision and mentorship, policies that are consistent with these goals, and a collective effort to make it happen.

Best,

Brenda Brouwer, PhD

Vice-Provost and Dean, School of Graduate Studies