IIRP WORKING GROUP: Revisioning Graduate Studies

September 6, 2016

Report for Community Consultation on Implementation
Working Group: Revisioning Graduate Studies

Members: Barbara Crow, Margaret Hough, Melissa Judd, Steve Bailey, Daniel Cohn, Jen Gilbert, Don Hastie, Sushanta Mitra, Adrienne Perry, Marlis Schweitzer, Katherine Chung, Marva Milo

Context:

Over the last two decades in Canada, the numbers of graduate students, graduate programs, and graduate scholarships have increased tremendously. In the last decade alone, the number of doctoral students has doubled in the province of Ontario, graduate students are getting younger, and there has been an increased demand for professional master’s degrees. Moreover, many of these younger students now attending graduate school have experienced more student-focused undergraduate services and thus have similar expectations at the graduate level.

Since the inception of the Ontario government’s Reaching Higher (2005) strategy, York has struggled to meet its recruitment and scholarship targets. In the last decade, York’s domestic graduate applications have declined by 17 percent. At the same time, our international graduate applications have increased in a provincial context that does not fund international students. Moreover, with the most recent CUPE 3903 labour dispute, the inclusion of a higher international tuition offset means that we will be taking in fewer international students. With declining domestic applications, and creating conditions that do not allow us to admit a higher proportion of international students, York has neither met its provincial targets nor attended the minimum proportion of domestic and international graduate students to be considered a research-intensive university.

Over the last three years, the Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS) has changed how we support scholarship applications and we have increased our success rates by 100

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2 Metrics for provincial differentiation for graduate education include: number of graduate degrees awarded; number of graduate awards/scholarships; number of graduate degrees awarded to undergraduate degrees awarded; graduate to undergraduate ratio; and PhD degrees awarded to undergraduate degrees awarded. Ratio of international to domestic graduates used by Times Higher Education Rankings.
percent. In 2016, we were successful in securing two Trudeau fellowships with another external candidate bringing his award to York. This meant that York received three of the fifteen national awards. We know that we have talented graduate students doing innovative and provocative research. Despite these successes, the allocation context for the Tri-Council scholarships has changed. It will no longer be the case that our students can compete based on their merit alone. The Tri-Council has introduced a new form of allocation determined partially by the amount of Tri-Council funding faculty members secure. As a result of our decline in faculty Tri-Council funding, we lost seven SSHRC master’s fellowships for the 2017-2018 competition.

Many external factors that partially explain our declines in applications include increased provincial competition for graduate spaces, CUPE 3903 strikes, shifting graduate funding models, and the changing demographics of graduate students. Most recently, HEQCO’s second report on differentiation identified the University of Toronto as “internationally competitive,” six universities were designated as research-intensive, and York was designated as a “regional” or “in-between” university with Carleton, Ryerson and Windsor. This has serious implications for how the provincial government may support graduate education in the future.

Finally, the Shared Accountability and Resource Planning (SHARP) budget model will be in full implementation in 2017-2018. With this model, parts of graduate funding that were located in FGS will be fully transferred to individual Faculties. As a result of this change in budget allocation, Faculties will have more overt responsibility for graduate education. The Working Group was asked to reflect on what academic and non-academic tasks should continue to be shared between FGS and the Faculties, which should be separated, and which eliminated.

York’s commitment to being a comprehensive and research-intensive university requires that ten per cent of the student population be full-time domestic graduate students (University Academic Plan, 2015-2010 and Strategic Research Plan, 2013-2018). Graduate students constitute the largest group of active researchers and scholars on campus and play a significant role in undergraduate teaching as teaching assistants. The position of the Working Group is that the strength and

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3 In 2015 and 2016, York increased Canada Graduate Scholarship results from 13 to 27 and 26 awards.
4 Up to 15 Trudeau Doctoral Fellowships are awarded annually, value $40,000, http://www.trudeaufoundation.ca/en/programs/doctoral-scholarships
5 Martin Hicks and Linda Jonker, “The Differentiation of the Ontario University System: Where are we now and where should we go?” Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, July 12, 2016.
6 Graduate funding has been a shared resource. Individual Faculties covered the costs of tutorial assistantships salaries and vacation benefits, graduate teaching, course releases for graduate program directors, and graduate program administrators. The Faculty of Graduate Studies administered external scholarships and the CUPE 3903 collective agreement funds associated with tutorial and graduate assistantships (grant-in-aid, graduate financial assistance, international tuition offset).
diversity of graduate education is critical for enhancing York’s excellence in research and teaching.

The Working Group strongly supports the role of FGS to foster excellence in graduate education and postdoctoral research at York. FGS is committed to supporting and advocating for graduate student and postdoctoral scholar success, intensifying research, delivering innovative and accountable services, and providing oversight to ensure high quality graduate programming, teaching, and learning. Currently, there are 105 graduate degrees and 34 graduate diplomas (masters, n=62 and doctoral, n=42) with 1,616 part-time and 2,530 full-time master’s students and 254 part-time and 1,644 full-time doctoral students, for a total number of graduate students of 6,044.

The changing graduate landscape at the national and provincial levels, the cyclical program reviews, the national graduate student survey data, recommendations from the Academic and Administrative Program Review (AAPR) and the shift to the Shared Accountability and Resource Planning (SHARP) budget in 2017-2018 have all informed the Working Group’s recommendations on how to strengthen and re-visions graduate education at York.

The scope of the Working Group was wide, and concentrated on ways to successfully transfer and support greater alignment of graduate education across the lead Faculties. It is critical that we respect the work that FGS has done over the last fifty years, while providing ways to support more active engagement and more fulsome responsibilities of the Faculties for graduate education. Specifically, the Working Group has focused on a small number of concrete and action-ready recommendations to support, clarify, and enhance the transition of some of the governance, administrative, and funding functions from FGS to the Faculties.

The Working Group consulted a range of documents and met with a number of constituent groups to address ways to facilitate the outcomes set out by the IIRP Working Group: Revisioning Graduate Studies which were:

1. Enhance graduate programs including increased research success through stronger alignment with anchor faculties;
2. Enhance services for graduate students;
3. Clarify roles of FGS and anchor Faculties, supporting enhanced coordination of undergraduate and graduate planning around enrolments, curriculum, and complement;
4. Support stronger graduate education; and
5. Streamline organization for better utilization of resources.

7 Canadian Graduate Professional Student Survey, http://www.cags.ca/cgpss/
Process:

The Working Group on Revisioning Graduate Studies followed the mandate set out in Group’s Terms of Reference as set out by the executive sponsors:

Within the context of York’s Institutional Integrated Resources Plan (IIRP), the Working Group on Envisioning the Role of FGS is established in an advisory capacity with the expectation that the group will produce a report of recommendations based on the information gathered from the faculties and relevant committees. This discussion will build upon and complement the work already under way led by the AVP Graduate.

The significant attention to graduate programs in the Academic Task Force Report indicates the relevance of understanding the relationship between graduate and undergraduate programs, ensuring quality programs, adequate resources, and as a consequence, clearer accountability of the anchor Faculties for graduate education working in partnership with FGS to provide oversight and to facilitate quality. (See Appendix A)

The Group met nine times (see Appendix B) and consulted with the graduate program directors, the FGS Academic Planning & Policy Committee, the FGS Council graduate student representatives, as well as Deans, and Associate Deans (see Appendix C).

Recommendations:

The Working Group proposes the following 29 recommendations to support the transition and enhancement of a variety of administrative and governance matters from the Faculty of Graduate Studies to the lead Faculties. The Working Group maintains that it is crucial that these transitions need to be shaped by a graduate student centred perspective and have clear timelines; that we avoid reproducing and duplicating graduate administration and governance in the lead Faculties; and that we continue to support interdisciplinary, pan-university graduate initiatives.

Through our review of relevant literature and consultations with the various constituent groups, there was agreement on the significance and value of graduate education and the ways in which York University can better articulate and support graduate students and graduate education. Moreover, throughout our consultations, participants placed significant emphasis on the importance of clearly communicating changes with timelines and expressed a strong desire to maintain a number of key functions centrally rather than duplicating tasks within each Faculty.

We have organized 29 recommendations around three themes pertaining to graduate studies: 1) clarifying governance roles; 2) clarifying administrative roles; and 3) imagining graduate education from a student centred perspective.
1.) Clarifying governance roles

In order to better align graduate education with the Faculties, the Working Group recommends ways to bring graduate governance into the Faculties without duplicating the efficient practices and tasks of the Faculty of Graduate Studies. It was widely conveyed that graduate programs and graduate students want to have a pan-university body to provide oversight and advocacy for graduate education.

The working group reviewed the governance structures of a number of graduate Faculties in Canada. Throughout the country, there are combined structures of centralized and Faculty based governance. From Queen’s University, with a Graduate Studies Executive Council ensuring that FGS committees follow appropriate procedures to Simon Fraser University Senate Graduate Studies Committee addressing the approval of items regarding graduate programs submitted by Faculty Graduate Studies Committees.

The working group was presented with a number of scenarios based on practices across the country to shape discussions about possible governance structures in the new SHARP context (see Appendix D). In discussion with various constituent groups, the working group’s recommendations reflect a way to transition graduate governance to ensure pan-university standards, to facilitate quality across and between graduate programs, and fair administration of processes and guidelines for students and faculty.

Graduate programs would come forward with academic and administrative changes to the Academic Planning and Policy Committee of the FGS Faculty Council to ensure adherence to FGS guidelines and return to Faculties for approval and then move such items to Senate.

FGS would continue to have responsibility for oversight of ethics reviews, student appeals and petitions, academic honesty, the university wide teaching award, administration of external scholarships and internal matched funds awards, and dissertation submission and thesis defenses, FGS will be responsible for all items
pertaining to students’ academic and funding records.

**Recommendations:**

**In Faculties:**

1. create and integrate graduate matters into curriculum committees and have graduate representation on Council executives (e.g. Academic Policy Committees)
2. assume responsibility for approving appointments of graduate and adjunct faculty and program director appointments
3. simplify graduate appointment processes with the expectation that professorial stream faculty are to be appointed to graduate faculty with supervisory provisions (i.e. all professorial stream faculty members are eligible to teach in graduate programs)
4. provide clear guidelines for the review of new graduate programs, minor and major modifications in the York University Quality Assurance Process

**In the Faculty of Graduate Studies:**

5. continue to provide centralized oversight and advocacy for graduate student appeals, petitions, and academic honesty committees
6. maintain responsibility for graduate student academic and funding record
7. provide oversight for the administration of the Unit 1 and Unit 3 CUPE 3903 Collective Agreements

2.) Clarifying administrative roles

The Working Group recommends that each Faculty integrate graduate program assistants (GPAs) and graduate program directors (GPDs) into its administration. Faculties will need to make explicit to whom these individuals report and how graduate programming and planning will be addressed.

As there is a range of graduate programs within the Faculties, there may be different ways to configure the integration of graduate planning and programming. However, the recommended model is for graduate program directors to report to Chairs and that each Faculty have an Associate Dean with responsibility for graduate education.

**Recommendations:**

**In Faculties:**

8. appoint an Associate Dean or senior academic administrator with graduate education in their portfolio
9. develop clear reporting lines and integration of GPAs and GPDs in Faculties
10. provide appropriate training for GPAs, GPDs, and Faculty enrolment managers regarding graduate student academic record and graduate student funding
11. provide graduate programs with revenue and costs
12. develop career services support for graduate students and post-doctoral fellows
13. develop and integrate strategic graduate enrolment and retention in administration

In the Faculty of Graduate Studies:

14. administer and provide oversight of graduate student academic and funding record
15. provide central adjudication and administration of external scholarships such as the Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS), Tri-Council Scholarships (SSHRC, NSERC, CIHR) and University matched funds’ awards
16. central administration of academic honesty and appeals
17. manage ethics approval process, review of doctoral proposals, and thesis and dissertation submission
18. change name to the School of Graduate and Post-Doctoral Studies
19. provide clear communication to parties about changes in FGS
20. fulfill responsibility for centralized records of graduate student and post-doctoral visitors and fellows

3.) Imagining graduate education from student centred perspective:

Shifting to a graduate student centred position requires that we listen to graduate students and the various data that have been collected about their academic experiences over the last decade.\(^8\) While we discussed many items during the consultations, the Working Group has decided to focus on activities to facilitate timely completion of doctoral degree studies. Specifically, we noted strong support from students for structures to help ensure that doctoral degrees can be completed in fifteen terms.

Currently, 65 per cent of doctoral degree programs are represented to be completed within four years, 25 per cent in five years, and ten per cent in six years (see Appendix E). A number of faculty and graduate students recommended strategies for facilitating timely completion of degree with more explicit attention to learning outcomes. Questions for consideration include: How do graduate courses relate to one another in a program? How are assignments allocated across curriculum?; Should students be required to have all major course materials due at the same

\(^8\) Canadian Graduate Professional Student Survey 2013 and Cyclical Program Reviews.
time?; How could we provide more teaching opportunities for doctoral students?; How can we ensure greater interaction and communication between graduate students and their supervisors (i.e. student meets with supervisor on a regular basis to ensure progress of the thesis program)?; How could we better articulate degree competencies? Moreover, how can we provide more structure and support for students’ timely completion?

By recommending that specific governance and administrative responsibilities move from the Faculty of Graduate Studies to the lead Faculties, the Working Group aims to provide Faculties with opportunities to review individual graduate program curricula from courses and comprehensives to the form of dissertation, graduate supervision and supervisory committees with specific expectations related to a given discipline/field which would allow for a model of graduate education that would best reflect these often diverse expectations.

Finally, while not directly related to time to completion, there was significant support for providing critical pathways for increasing and ensuring access to Indigenous graduate students.

**Recommendations:**

**In Faculties:**

21. support timely degree completion through a review of courses, comprehensive examinations, and supervision and supervisory committee guidelines in individual graduate programs
22. require new hires to earn graduate supervision certificate available through the Teaching Commons
23. develop and implement graduate programming to attract and support Indigenous graduate students
24. consider integrating career development activities into learning outcomes to facilitate smoother transition for post-PhD

**In the Faculty of Graduate Studies:**

25. share graduate program best practices regarding time to completion
26. support and facilitate each graduate program in the development, implementation, and monitoring of graduate program milestones and consequences for not achieving such graduate program milestones
27. connect university initiatives to support Indigenous graduate students
28. move from an eighteen to fifteen term full-time doctoral degree
29. implement centralized services specific to graduate students with mental health concerns and/or disabilities in conjunction with Counselling and Disability Services (CDS)
Implementation Chart of Working Group Recommendations:

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<th>Complete By:</th>
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<th>Fall 2016</th>
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<td><strong>Administrative:</strong>&lt;br&gt;Faculties</td>
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<td>12. Develop career services support for graduate students and post-doctoral fellows</td>
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<td>21. Fulfill responsibility for centralized records of graduate student and post-doctoral visitors and fellows</td>
<td>3. Simplify graduate appointment processes with the expectation</td>
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<td>5. Continue to provide centralized oversight and advocacy for graduate student</td>
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<td>appeals, petitions, and academic honesty committees</td>
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<td>6. Responsible for graduate student academic and funding record</td>
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<td>7. Provide oversight and administration of the Unit 1 and 3 CUPE 3903</td>
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<td>Collective Agreements</td>
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22. Require new hires to earn graduate supervision certificate available through the Teaching Commons

23. Develop and implement graduate programming to attract and support Indigenous graduate students

24. Consider integrating career development activities into learning outcomes to facilitate smoother transition for post-PhD
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<td>graduate program milestones and consequences for not achieving milestones</td>
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Resources provided from FGS:

- Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey 2013
- FGS Report of APPRC
- FGS 2014 Year End Review
- FGS First Response to UAP
- FGS IRP 2015-2020
- FGS AAPR PIF
- Graduate Studies Structures at Institutions Activity-Based Budget and Non-Activity Based Budget Combined
Appendix A: Terms of Reference (please see attached document I was unable to insert “TOR Working Group FGS.doc”)

1.0 Context

York is committed to supporting excellence in graduate programs and education. While it is important that undergraduate and graduate planning be integrated, we must also recognize that graduate students are distinct from undergraduate students in terms of their experiences and learning and support needs, including attention to professional development.

Work is already under way led by the AVP Graduate/Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies in collaboration with Deans of anchor Faculties, GPDs and other colleagues, to integrate graduate studies and planning into those anchor Faculties; it is of key importance that this process continue to completion including consultation with graduate students in order to provide a clear proposal on the future structure of graduate studies including clear lines of responsibility and accountability. These discussions present a timely opportunity to review the structure and role of FGS with the proposed fuller integration of academic programming (including governance) into anchor Faculties.

There is general agreement around the value of positioning FGS to have an advocacy, policy and regulation oversight role over graduate education, but at the same time, clarity around responsibilities, the governance of academic processes, and so on need to be confirmed.

2.0 Mandate

Within the context of York’s Institutional Integrated Resources Plan (IIRP), the Working Group on Envisioning the Role of FGS is established in an advisory capacity with the expectation that the group will produce a report of recommendations based on the information gathered from the faculties and relevant committees. This discussion will build upon and complement the work already under way led by the AVP Graduate.

The significant attention to graduate programs in the Academic Task Force Report indicates the relevance of understanding the relationship between graduate and undergraduate programs, ensuring quality programs, adequate resources, and as a consequence, clearer accountability of the anchor Faculties for graduate education working in partnership with FGS to provide oversight and to facilitate quality.

The Working Group will refine its terms of reference to set out in greater detail the anticipated outcomes; its recommendations are expected to focus on actions and resources to achieve the general IIRP outcomes below.
3.0 Outcomes

1. Enhanced graduate programs including increased research success through stronger alignment with anchor faculties
2. Enhanced services for graduate students
3. Roles of FGS and anchor Faculties will be clarified, supporting enhanced coordination of undergraduate and graduate planning around enrolments, curriculum, complement, etc.
4. Stronger support for graduate education
5. Better utilization of resources, potential savings as a result of organizational streamlining

4.0 Roles

Working Group Chairs: In collaboration with each other and with their respective working group members, the Chairs will ensure that meetings are scheduled and ensure timely completion of the process (report). The Chairs carry primary responsibility for drafting the working group recommendation report, with the input of working group members and support resources. Working group chairs will participate on the IIRP steering committee.

Working Group Members: Members of each Task Force are responsible to regularly attend meetings, actively participate and carry out the work to provide recommendations on the process implementation, details, and priorities in order to draft the final report.

Administrative Support: Staff members assigned to support the working group will be responsible for scheduling of meetings, arranging space, assisting Chairs with draft agendas, tracking progress toward timely completion of work, and ensuring effective communication with and among various working groups and the steering committee. Staff members are also responsible to support the Chairs in preparing for meetings, attend and take notes as required, collect any requested data and provide analysis if requested and follow up on action items from meetings.

5.0 Timelines

The working group will begin work in December 2015 and are expected to deliver a draft report of recommendations by ________.

If any specific recommendations are made to continue or action the recommendations presented in the working group report, the executive sponsors will agree on the process to extend the mandate beyond ____________.
6.0 Communication

If the working group wishes to communicate relevant information to, or consult with, the broader University community, such communication will be drafted by the relevant working group chair and administrative support staff. The communication will then be sent to the IIRP Co-Sponsors (Vice-President Finance & Administration and Vice-President Academic & Provost) who will coordinate the dissemination.

Appendix: Excerpts from Relevant Documents

University Academic Plan
- Generating more opportunities for graduate students to fully participate in research (p. 8)
- Providing expanded post-doctoral opportunities at York (p. 8)
- Enhancing opportunities for students’ involvement in research projects, particularly at the graduate level (p. 10)
- Increasing the time spent by students in small group settings with full-time faculty members, including retaining the format of small graduate seminar classes (p. 10)
- Coordination of graduate/undergraduate planning around curriculum, enrolments, and deployment of resources (p. 12)

White Paper
- We commit to identifying benchmarks and developing policies and mechanisms to increase the number of students who successfully complete their PhDs by the end of Year VI. (p. 12, benchmark #8)
- We will improve the overall research profile as well as the quality of graduate and postdoctoral programs by increasing both the number of successful applications from York students and postdoctoral fellows for externally-funded domestic and international scholarships and fellowships, as well as increasing the numbers of students and postdoctoral fellows coming to York with external awards to 25% by 2015. (p. 13, benchmark # 9)

Academic Task Force
2. Provide all graduate programs with clear information about their revenue and cost structures and encourage them to explore less resource-intensive operating models that do not significantly impair quality. (p. 18)
3. Articulate an explicit sustainability strategy for every graduate program based on linkages to undergraduate programs or other sources of support. (p. 18)
4. Provide graduate programs with the flexibility and autonomy to respond more nimbly to changes in the graduate education landscape. (p. 18)
5. Define a clear identity and target audience for all Masters degree programs in light of changing graduate student pathways and increased external competition. (p. 18)
6. Require Masters programs to be well established and sustainable, with demonstrated quality outcomes, before launching a PhD in the area. (p. 18)
7. Implement proactive steps to promote timely completion in every PhD program. (p. 18)
Appendix B: Working Group Meetings

WEEK 1: Tuesday, January 12, 2016 from 3:00 PM – 4:30 PM

WEEK 2: Tuesday, January 26, 2016 from 3:00 PM – 4:30 PM

WEEK 3: Thursday, February 11, 2016 from 10:00 AM – 11:30 AM

WEEK 4: Thursday, February 25, 2016 from 10:00 AM – 11:30 AM

WEEK 5: Wednesday, March 9, 2016 from 10:00 AM – 11:30 AM

WEEK 6: Tuesday, March 22, 2016 from 3:00 PM – 4:30 PM

WEEK 7: Thursday, April 7, 2016 from 11:00 AM – 12:30 PM

WEEK 8: Thursday, April 21, 2016 from 11:00 AM – 12:30 PM

WEEK 9: May 24, 2016 from 2:00 PM – 5:00 PM
Appendix C: Consultations

**GPDs**: Tuesday, April 12, 2016 from 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

**FGS APPC**: Wednesday, April 20, 2016 from 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM

**AD Research**: Thursday, May 5, 2016 from 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

**FGS Council**: Thursday, May 5, 2016 from 4:30 PM – 6:00 PM
Appendix D: Graduate Governing Structures

Current State

FGS Council
- University-wide Policy
- FGS Teaching Award
- Graduate Faculty Appointment Criteria
- Graduate Curriculum

Graduate Governance Structures

Graduate Re-visioning Working Group

Scenario 1

FGS Council
- University-wide Policy
- FGS Teaching Award
- Graduate Faculty Appointment Criteria

Graduate Curriculum
- Graduate Programs
- FGS for Administration Review and Approval
- Resource Faculty for Academic Review and Approval
- Senate

Assumption: All Resource Faculty Council will have a Graduate Committee mandated to review and approve curriculum proposals. FGS and FGS Council continue to exist with reduced mandate.

Scenario 2

FGS (administrative unit only)

Resource Faculty Council
- Senate

Assumption: All policy is Senate level. FGS is purely an administrative body with all academic decision-making within Resource Faculty.
Scenario 3

**SENATE**
- University-wide Policy
- Teaching Award

**Registrar's Office**

**Graduate Programs**

**Resource Faculty Council**

**Senate**

Assumptions: Registrar's Office and Resource Faculty Council have the resources required to operate statewide policy and activities relevant to graduate education. Assumes grad and undergrad are administered and governed identically. No separate unit devoted to graduate education.
Appendix E: Doctoral Program length advertised on program website

6 Years (4 Programs)

4 Years (26 programs)

Art History and Visual Culture  Biology
(3-5 years)
Business Administration
Chemistry (3-5 years)  Cinema &
Media Studies  Civil Engineering
Communication & Culture
Computer Science
Critical Disability Studies (4-5 years)
Dance Studies
Earth & Space Science
Economics
Education: Language, Culture & Teaching
Environmental Studies
Geography  Health
History
Human Resource Management
Humanities
Law
Linguistics & Applied Linguistics
Mathematics & Statistics  Mechanical
Engineering
Physics & Astronomy
Socio-Legal Studies  Visual
Arts

5 Years (10 programs)

Anthropology
Kinesiology & Health Science  Music
Philosophy
Psychology
Science & Technology Studies  Social
& Political Thought  Social Work
Sociology
Theatre & Performance Studies

6 Years (4 programs)

English
Etudes Francophones
Gender, Feminist & Women’s Studies  Political Science
Political Science