

**From:** College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies <university.announcements@usask.ca>  
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## Important graduate studies information for programs and units

### Advisory Committee Changes

A set of changes to enhance advisory committee composition and thesis/dissertation defence processes for master's and Ph.D. programs was approved by CGPS Council in January 2022. Key changes and implementation dates are summarized [here](#).

### Defence Process Feedback

In parallel with implementing the recently-approved change to supervisory and examining committee structures, we are reviewing our defence processes with an eye to streamlining and updating associated paperwork and the interactions between CGPS, the unit, the External Examiner, and the new University Examiner role. Further details regarding these changes will be shared with units in a variety of formats prior to the May 1, 2022 implementation date for new students. However, if there are any particular pain points or difficulties your program(s) have with the current process, especially as they relate to PhD defences, please identify those and potential solutions that would help to resolve these in your unit. Suggestions can be sent to [marc.usunier@usask.ca](mailto:marc.usunier@usask.ca).

### Current Defence Paperwork

Just a reminder that for Master's and PhD defences we require only **one copy** of each of the following **signed** documents to be submitted following the defence:

## Master's

- GPS 403.2 – Oral Defence Report of the External Examiner
- GPS 403.4 – Report of Oral Defence of a Master's Thesis

## PhD

- Recommendation for Award of PhD
- Certification of Thesis Work
- GPS 403.2 – Oral Defence Report of the External Examiner
- GPS 403.3 - Oral Defence Report of the Dean's Designate

**\*\*All students must also upload a signed and completed copy of the GPS 404 with their thesis to the ETD site\*\***

### **Graduate Student Hiring and Pay Changes**

In response to numerous concerns raised by Graduate Students and departments, PSAC and the University have signed a new Memorandum of Agreement allowing the University to improve Graduate Student hiring processes. To that end, **effective May 1, 2022, the option of hiring Graduate Students into a term or hourly; and casual appointments will resume** allowing a more consistent onboarding process and desirable payroll practices for Graduate Student Employees. Targeted communications regarding the impact of this change are currently underway in a joint effort between Labour Relations, Public Service Alliance of Canada, College of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies, and ConnectionPoint.

Additionally, further review of potential causes of pay delays for Graduate Students identified several pinch points. One factor discovered was that Graduate Students were potentially not aware of how their pay was processed nor when it would be paid which includes their requirement to be registered in their graduate program before payroll cutoff dates to ensure pay actions can proceed. See the attached process flow document for an illustration of typical touchpoints within USask's Graduate Student payroll streams.

To support the hiring process several tools are being developed that include refreshed templates, KnowledgeBase articles, visual aids and a collaborative communication approach with the intent to improve the overall student experience and to provide support to departments. In the meantime, if you have any questions, these can be directed to [cgps.eo@usask.ca](mailto:cgps.eo@usask.ca) to triage on behalf of the collaborators.

### **Grad Admin Handbook Update**

Angela Ryde in our office is working to update the Grad Admin Handbook first launched last year. If you haven't already done so, please take a few minutes to provide feedback on the current version of the handbook [found here](#). You can also reach out to [angela.ryde@usask.ca](mailto:angela.ryde@usask.ca) directly with any additional comments.

### **IRCC Processing Times**

Please note that IRCC processing times for study permits have often been well beyond the 12-week estimate provided on the [government's website](#). As such, please be sure to make all international admission recommendations to CGPS for future terms as soon as possible to allow students sufficient time to complete and submit their study permit applications.

### **Entrance GPA Calculation**

We've developed the attached tip sheet to assist units in answering some common questions that come up regarding entrance GPA calculation for graduate programs. While the tip sheet does not include all potential scenarios, the information included should be relevant to the majority of applicant situations. If you have a specific application file that you need help with, please reach out to your Program Advisor through the [CGPS Service Desk](#).

### **Admissions Blackouts**

As a follow-up to recent conversations at both Grad Admin Forum and Grad Chair Forum, CGPS will be implementing a pilot admissions blackout period beginning in the Spring 2022 term. What this means is that for the 15 days leading up to the start of a term, we will only be processing admissions for students who are either current USask students or already located near Saskatoon and who have applied to begin in that term. For example, units must recommend all international students prior to April 15 for a spring term start, prior to August 15 for a fall term start and prior to December 10 for a winter term start. If a student is recommended after those dates, we will work with the unit to determine a subsequent start term that is convenient for the program/supervisor and student.

Please note that even if we receive a recommendation to admit an international student before the blackout period unless the student is already in Canada, it is unlikely that they will have time to submit their study permit application and receive their permit prior to the start of term. You can check the Government of Canada study permit processing times [here](#). All study permit-related questions can be directed to [ISSAC](#).

### **Aurora Coming to the Grad Hub February 21, 2022**

In an innovative approach to preparing graduate students and postdoctoral fellows to adapt to a post-pandemic job market, the College of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies has partnered with [Beyond the Professoriate](#) and is offering free access to the Aurora career-exploration platform. [Find out more here.](#)

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The CGPS Operational Bulletin is sent to Graduate Administrators and Graduate Chairs

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 **Attachments:**

[GPACalculationTipSheet.pdf](#)

[paymentprocessflow.pdf](#)