

The following Motions and Documents were considered by the GFC Academic Planning Committee at its Wednesday, October 04, 2023 meeting:

Agenda Title: **Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research Name Change**

THAT the Academic Planning Committee recommend that the General Faculties Council approve the change of name from the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research to the Faculty of Graduate and Post-doctoral Studies to take effect upon final approval.

FINAL Item 4.



Decision **Discussion** **Information**

ITEM OBJECTIVE: It is being recommended that the name of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR) be changed to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS).

DATE	October 4, 2023
TO	Academic Planning Committee (APC)
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO	FGSR

MOTION:

THAT the Academic Planning Committee recommend that the General Faculties Council approve the change of name from the *Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research* to the *Faculty of Graduate and Post-doctoral Studies* to take effect upon final approval.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research is proposing that the name of the Faculty be changed to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS).

Considerations:

1. The Faculty of Graduate Studies was established in 1957, in a decade that saw the rapid expansion of programs, especially at the PhD level, as well as student numbers. In 1967, the word “Research” was added to the Faculty’s name when it was given responsibility for the administration of external grants.[1] While that responsibility subsequently shifted to the Office of the Vice-President Research, the “R” in “FGSR” remains – a matter of curiosity inside and outside the University.

2. In summer 2022, the “post-doc office” was transferred to FGSR from the Vice-President Research and Innovation portfolio. Since then, FGSR has actively accepted that transfer as a positive, long-term part of its role. To that end, it has built relationships with the Post-Doctoral Fellows Association; it has begun to administer the new Collective Agreement for the University, and has identified policy work to be tackled; it has co-sponsored a first on-boarding event together with the Association; it has extended professional development and supervisory training opportunities to members; and it has assumed administration of a number of University-endowed post-doctoral fellowships as well as travel funds.

3. The final report of the External Review of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (June 2023) recommended the following: “In recognition of this important new role for FGSR (and in line with a global trend), we propose that the name of FGSR be changed to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs (FGSPA).”[2] The *Report* noted the relatively large numbers of

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postdoctoral scholars at the U of A and the need to provide them with “robust, consistent support,” given their contributions to the University’s research and teaching mission.

4. Graduate faculties or their equivalent in at least eight other U15 member universities have incorporated postdoctoral responsibilities into their formal names. Seven of the eight refer to “Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies” (BC, McGill, Ottawa, Saskatchewan, Western), or, in French, “Études supérieures et postdoctorales” (Laval, Montréal). Only at Queen’s, the name is “Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs.” Our preference is for the shorter name. The acronym – GPS – suggests an orientation to way-finding that is consistent with the rebranding of the Faculty.

5. The Post-Doctoral Fellows Association fully supports this name change. (See the attached letter.) In discussions in recent months, the Association’s leadership has been clear that post-doctoral scholars cannot simply be subsumed under “graduate studies,” and that a name change would help to identify them as a distinct and important constituent group at the University of Alberta. This recommendation concurs in that understanding.

[1] Arthur G. McCalla, *The Development of Graduate Studies at the University of Alberta* (Edmonton: University of Alberta, 1983), pp. 2-3.

[2] Cheryl Misak, Fahim Quadir, and Robin Yates, *External Review of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research* (June 2023), p. 16, recommendation 4.

Risk Discussion / Mitigation of the Risk:

We have identified no significant risks. The renaming will help with rebranding the Faculty at a good time to be doing so. It honestly reflects our expanded scope of responsibilities. While we are aware that some students do not read the numerous emails, grad digest items, and other communications they receive from FGSR, we expect to announce the new name in every interaction with students, in signage on our building, and in the launch of a refurbished website. Former students who need to contact the Faculty for any reason will most likely begin online, where old links they may still have will direct them to the new site.

Next Steps:

As stated above, the name change will coincide with post-Unit Review rebranding opportunities for the Faculty. We expect to announce the new name in every interaction with students, in signage on our building, and in the launch of a refurbished website. Those efforts will be part of a modest, strategic communications campaign that will be ready once final approval for the name change is received. The acronym GPS has some potential – maybe even on a sweatshirt! It suggests way-finding and global positioning.

Following approval, significant work to be undertaken to update references in institutional documents, including the University calendar, systems, websites, and institutional policy (where such changes would be considered friendly edits).



Supporting Materials:

- Supporting Letter from the PDFA
- Supporting Letter from the GSA

Engagement and Routing

Consultation and Stakeholder Participation / Approval Route (parties who have seen the proposal and in what capacity) <[Governance Resources Section Student Participation Protocol](#)>

Those who are actively participating:

- PostDoctoral Fellows Association (PDFA)
- FGSR Council
- Graduate Students Association (GSA)
- Office of the Vice-President (Research and Innovation)

Those who have been consulted:

- Deans' Council
- PEC-O
- Provost's Council
- FGSR Council
- Academic Planning Committee
- Graduate Program Support Team

Those who have been informed:

- GFC Programs' Committee

Approval Route:

- APC - For recommendation - October 4, 2023
- FGSR Council - For recommendation - October 11, 2023
- GFC - For final approval - October 16, 2023



September 1, 2023

Subject: Supporting the Name Change of Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR) to Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS).

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I, Dr. Shahid Ullah, President of, the Post-Doctoral Fellows Association (PDFFA), University of Alberta, am writing on behalf the PDFFA members to express my strong support for the proposed name change from the “Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research” to the “Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies” at the University of Alberta. I believe this change accurately reflects the evolving landscape of academia and the vital role that postdoctoral fellows play in our institution’s research and academic pursuits. As a member of the academic community, I understand the importance of recognizing and including postdoctoral scholars in the faculty’s name.

The inclusion of “Postdoctoral” in the title not only acknowledges the significant contributions made by postdoctoral researchers but also emphasizes the commitment of our university to support and nurture their growth and development.

Moreover, this name change aligns with the broader trends in higher education, where postdoctoral scholars are recognized as essential contributors to research, teaching and innovation. It sends a clear message to current and prospective postdoctoral researchers that our institution values their role in advancing knowledge and scholarships.

I believe that this change will enhance the visibility and recognition of the faculty, attracting top-tier postdoctoral talents and promoting a more inclusive academic environment.

In Conclusion, I wholeheartedly support the proposed name change from the “Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR)” to the “Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS)”. I encourage the university administration to move forward with this change to reflect our commitment to excellence and inclusivity in higher education and research.

I appreciate for considering my perspective on this matter. I look forward to witnessing the positive impact this change will have on our academic community and thus the entire university.

Sincerely,

AKM Shahid Ullah, MPH,MSc,PhD

President, Post-Doctoral Research Fellows Association



Graduate Students' Association

University of Alberta

Dear Members of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research,

I would like to strongly express my support for the faculty name change from the University of Alberta Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR) to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS). I believe this new name will be representative, inclusive, and further illustrate the significant change in the FGSR's mandate as per the recommendation of external review.

In summer 2022, the "post-doctoral office" was transferred to FGSR from the Vice-President Research and Innovation portfolio. Since then, FGSR has actively viewed that transfer as a positive, long-term part of its role. Therefore, it is essential to update the faculty's name to reflect this adjustment given the vital task that post-doctoral fellows play in advancing research at UofA.

I am confident that the post-doctoral office will flourish under the guidance of the faculty.

Bishoi Hany Gamil Aziz

Bishoi Aziz, GSA President, 2023-2024.