

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
AGENDA FOR THE FACULTY SENATE MEETING
APRIL 7, 2021
Electronic Meeting^{*}, 3:00 – 4:15 p.m.

I. Call to Order

II. Approval of the Minutes of March 3, 2021

III. Opening Remarks – Shannon Davis, Chair

IV. Committee Reports

A. Senate Standing Committees

Executive Committee – Shannon Davis, Chair

- Mason Korea Faculty Assembly Updates: [Bylaws](#) and Officer Elections
- Coffee and Connect with Faculty Senate Executive Committee [Appendix A](#)
- Joint Resolution with Staff Senate: Feasibility Study for Dependent Tuition Waiver [Appendix B](#)

Academic Policies – Suzanne Slayden, Chair

Budget and Resources - Tim Leslie, Chair

Faculty Matters – Solon Simmons, Chair

Nominations – Melissa Broeckelman-Post and Richard Craig, Co-chairs

Organization and Operations - Lisa Billingham, Chair

- Grading Process Task Force [Appendix C](#)

B. Other Committees/Faculty Representatives

Faculty Handbook Revision Committee – Suzanne Slayden [Appendix D](#)

****ACTION ITEM****

*Sustainable Research Collections Group** [Appendix E](#)

[Faculty Senate of Virginia Meeting Minutes](#)

Master Plan Steering Committee [Appendix H](#)

V. New Business

Motion Requesting Faculty Matters Committee to Propose Term to Tenure-line Pathway – Tim Gibson [Appendix F](#)

George Mason University’s Statement of Expectations for Graduate Students (draft) – Laurence Bray, Associate Provost for Graduate Education [Appendix G](#)

VI. Announcements

- Provost Ginsberg
- Sr. Vice President Carol Kissal

VII. Remarks for the Good of the General Faculty

VIII. Adjournment

ELECTRONIC MEETING

Topic: Faculty Senate Meeting (April 7, 2021)

Time: Apr 7, 2021 03:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Primary Electronic Meeting Venue - Zoom:

For security purposes -- all attendees *MUST* login using any valid Zoom account to join the meeting.

IMPORTANT: Faculty Senators must login using their GMU login/password from <https://gmu.zoom.us/> to be recognized.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://gmu.zoom.us/j/91756094549?pwd=dGpuN1Nub25LT0ovRDM5aHJiZHVxdz09>

In case of problems with joining the meeting, use the following information to join –

Meeting ID: 917 5609 4549

Passcode: 536979

Having Trouble Joining the Meeting with the link above?

All attendees must sign in into zoom before joining the meeting.

- Zoom sign-in: using your own zoom account credentials
-
- 1. If using GMU Zoom Account (required for all Faculty Senators)
 - a) Go to <https://gmu.zoom.us>
 - b) Click on [Sign into Your Account]
 - c) Use GMU login credentials to login. (May require 2FA authentication)
 - d) Once logged in – click on “JOIN A MEETING”
 - e) Enter the Meeting ID (see highlighted above) and click JOIN
 - f) If asked for Passcode: enter the Passcode (highlighted above)
- 2. Joining Senate Meeting using an account other than GMU Zoom Account
 - a. Go to <https://zoom.us>
 - b. Click on [SIGN IN]
 - c. Use credentials for your existing zoom account
 - d. Once logged in – click on “JOIN A MEETING”
 - e. Enter the Meeting ID (see highlighted above) and click JOIN
 - f. If asked for Passcode: enter the Passcode (highlighted above)

One tap mobile

+12678310333,,98849620930#,,,,*699848# US (Philadelphia)

+13017158592,,98849620930#,,,,*699848# US (Washington DC)

Dial by your location

+1 267 831 0333 US (Philadelphia)

+1 301 715 8592 US (Washington DC)

Meeting ID: 988 4962 0930

Passcode: 699848

Find your local number: <https://gmu.zoom.us/j/91756094549>

Join by SIP

98849620930@zoomcrc.com

Backup Electronic Meeting Venue – Blackboard Collaborate (in case of problems with Zoom)

Once activated – A Blackboard announcement will clearly indicate the venue has been moved from Zoom

Collaborate Ultra:

Faculty Senators must login into Blackboard and join meeting to be recognized

Organizations: Faculty Senate

Menu: “Collaborate Ultra”

Click on meeting link

Guests must use the following link to join:

<https://us.bbcollab.com/guest/6d83e373aff4c86982579ee6a10666b>

Dial-in for Collaborate: +1-571-392-7650 (PIN: 221 532 2011)

Appendix A

Faculty Senate Executive Committee Coffee Chat – April 9, 2021, 9:00 – 10:00 am

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://gmu.zoom.us/j/95679324868?pwd=T3kzT2FMRIJGeUVCdU55eUd2aHdJZz09>

Meeting ID: 956 7932 4868

Passcode: 952072

One tap mobile

+12678310333,,95679324868#,,,,*952072# US (Philadelphia)

+13017158592,,95679324868#,,,,*952072# US (Washington DC)

Dial by your location

+1 267 831 0333 US (Philadelphia)

+1 301 715 8592 US (Washington DC)

Meeting ID: 956 7932 4868

Passcode: 952072

Find your local number: <https://gmu.zoom.us/u/ab5nIospBu>

Join by SIP

95679324868@zoomcrc.com

Appendix B

Joint Resolution of George Mason University Faculty Staff and Staff Senate to be Delivered to Administration and Board of Visitors

April 2021

WHEREAS Mason faculty are compensated at the 37th percentile relative to our peer institutions; and

WHEREAS Mason staff have reported increasing concern with compensation levels when asked in the Quality of Work-Life survey; and

WHEREAS the regional high cost of living affects all Mason employees and their families; and

WHEREAS dependent tuition waivers are an important recruitment and retention benefit that can help to keep employees at Mason, and is currently a benefit that often draws faculty and staff to other institutions,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate calls upon the Administration and Board of Visitors to authorize a study to evaluate the feasibility, costs, and steps needed to offer a dependent tuition waiver as a benefit to Mason employees; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this study should include the possibility of a reciprocal agreement among all Commonwealth state university employees; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the results of this feasibility study should be shared with the Faculty Senate and Staff Senate by April 1, 2022.

Appendix C

Grading Process Task Force (Long-Term Project)

GOAL

The Grading Process Task Force will consider the grading scheme used at George Mason University for its undergraduate and graduate students and make a recommendation for our future grading processes. This task force is intended to evaluate the university's previous use of the plus/minus grading system prior to COVID-19, assess the implementation of the alternative grading system as a result of COVID-19, and develop a proposal for how we will transition from the optional alternative grading system used during this crisis to the grading scale that will be in place for the future. The Task Force is further asked to be mindful of students and programs with a variety of backgrounds, as well as the communicative value of grading schemas to students once they leave the institution.

CHARGE

The Grading Process Task Force is charged with doing the following:

- (i) Assess the advantages and disadvantages of the current A+ to F structure in place
- (ii) Conduct a thorough review of peer institutions, best practices, and existing scholarship about the advantages and disadvantages of other known schemes, including such options as Mason's 'Alternative Grading Scheme' used in Spring/Fall 2020, High Pass / Pass / Fail, ranked grading, straight A-F scales, plus/minus scales, and any other system deemed worthy of consideration by members of the committee
- (iii) Make a recommendation about which grading scheme best fits the institution's mission, providing a rationale and support for that recommendation
- (iv) Outline a potential timeline, cost, and a communication plan for implementing any recommended changes
- (v) The Task Force Chair shall be someone with a wide understanding of the Mason educational system.

DELIVERABLE OUTCOME

The Task Force is charged to bring a report, including proposed action items and rationales, to the Faculty Senate for subsequent approval and implementation by University Administration. If appropriate for time-sensitive elements, intermediate reports and action items are welcomed.

TIMELINE

The Grading Process Task Force shall deliver a preliminary report to Faculty Senate the semester following its inception, and in year two a report for final recommendations. The committee is encouraged to share regular progress as a part of the Faculty Senate agenda.

COMPOSITION

The Task Force shall be composed of:

- (i) One instructional faculty member from each college or school, elected by the faculty of that college or school, (this is not limited to tenure-track faculty)
- (ii) One member of the Academic Policies Committee
- (iii) Two students: one elected member of GAPSAs and one elected member of Student Senate
- (iv) the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education (or designate)
- (v) the Associate Provost for Graduate Education (or designate)
- (vi) the Director of the Stearns Center (or designate),
- (vii) representative from the Graduate Council
- (viii) the Registrar (or designate).

Appendix D

Faculty Handbook Revision Committee

Proposed Revisions to the Faculty Handbook

Faculty Senate meeting

April 7, 2021

Proposed revisions to the 2020 Faculty Handbook were presented to the Faculty Senate on March 24, 2021. After discussion during the Faculty Senate meeting, the committee recommended changes in three sections.

The revisions text and recommended changes are linked to <http://www.gmu.edu/resources/facstaff/senate/FacultyHandbook/fac-hndbk-rev-2021.htm>.

On behalf of the Committee, it is moved

That the Faculty Senate approve the proposed changes to the 2020 Faculty Handbook as submitted by the Faculty Handbook Revision Committee.

If the changes are approved by the Faculty Senate, they will be submitted to the Board of Visitors for final approval at its May meeting.

Committee members:

Girum Urgessa (VSE), Solon Simmons (Carter School), Suzanne Slayden (COS)

Appendix E

UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

Report to Faculty Senate, Spring 2021

This report provides updates on the Libraries' Elsevier journal subscriptions, the costs of large journal packages (or Big Deals), and efforts to build communication channels between the Libraries and Mason's faculty.

Elsevier "Big Deal"

In January, six members of the Virginia Research Libraries (VRL) group completed existing contract negotiations with Elsevier, one of the largest publishers of scholarly journals. Through a revised, one-year agreement for 2021, the University of Virginia, Virginia Tech, George Mason University, Old Dominion University, William & Mary, and James Madison University libraries addressed their priorities for affordability, accessibility, and equity. This group (along with Virginia Commonwealth University) will be back at the negotiating table later in 2021 aiming to reach a longer-term agreement with Elsevier.

The 2021 agreement frees the VRL institutions from Elsevier's bundled journal package or "Big Deal," the Freedom Collection, allowing for a collection that better reflects users' needs at each of the universities. Each institution involved reduced its overall spend for the year, balancing its COVID-distressed budget for 2021. Mason now subscribes to 223 Elsevier journals, and achieved a cost reduction of 45%. Those savings enabled the Libraries to cover the cost of inflation on the rest of our electronic resource subscriptions, and thus to avoid wide-ranging cuts in our online collections, despite a reduced library research materials budget.

To learn more about our amended contract, please visit the Libraries' [Elsevier overview site](#).

Continued Access to Elsevier Articles

Mason researchers continue to have access to all Elsevier articles through the Libraries. In many cases, our researchers still have immediate access to articles. For unsubscribed journals, articles published in or before 2020 are largely covered by delayed open access (OA) and/or by our perpetual access backfiles. For articles published in 2021 in unsubscribed journals, we have instant access to OA articles only. For any articles not available at a single click, we are utilizing our interlibrary loan networks.

Recently, the Virtual Library of Virginia (VIVA) invested in an improved interlibrary loan service (RapidILL) for all Virginia public institutions that will decrease both turnaround time and costs.

To learn more about alternate methods for locating articles in journals we no longer subscribe to, please visit the Libraries' [Alternative Access site](#).

Big Deals & the (Library) Research Materials Budget

Most of the Virginia research libraries involved in the Elsevier negotiations are experiencing budget shortfalls for 2021 and projecting budget shortfalls for 2022, and Mason is no exception. The Research Materials Budget (RMB) is the total budget allocation from the university to support the Libraries' collections. Since 2015, the RMB has been reduced every year, with the exception of a slight increase to assist with inflation in fiscal year 2020. Generally, the total cost of library materials increases by about 3% per year, largely due to price inflation

on subscription resources.

The table below provides the total cost of the five largest journal packages (Big Deals) Mason has alongside the total RMB. The five Big Deals are Elsevier, Springer-Nature, SAGE, Taylor & Francis, and Wiley.

Year	Cost of 5 Big Deals	Research Materials Budget	Big Deals as % of Budget
FY2014	\$ 2,435,770.41	\$ 10,121,105.00	24%
FY2015	\$ 2,527,393.78	\$ 10,381,105.00	24%
FY2016	\$ 2,616,798.66	\$ 10,221,105.00	26%
FY2017 ¹	\$ 2,550,472.45	\$ 9,936,369.00	26%
FY2018	\$ 2,649,133.13	\$ 9,455,369.00	28%
FY2019	\$ 2,726,665.14	\$ 9,405,131.00	29%
FY2020	\$ 2,871,907.92	\$ 9,505,131.00	30%
FY2021 projected ²	\$ 2,943,337.34	\$ 9,005,131.00	33%
FY2021 actual	\$ 2,406,949.54	\$ 9,083,651.00	26%

Communications with Faculty

In Fall 2020, the Libraries launched the Sustainable Research Collections Group (SRCG) to foster communication among faculty and librarians on the matters of changing scholarly communications models, sustainable journal prices, and the value of our largest journal packages. The faculty representatives on the SRCG are: Timothy Gibson (Faculty Senate), Ali Andalibi (College of Science), Jaime Lester (College of Humanities and Social Sciences), Kathryn Jacobsen (College of Health and Human Services), Christine Green (CEHD), and Richard Klimoski (School of Business). The SRCG meets approximately monthly to share information, work on a communications plan, and establish new communication channels.

In a rapidly changing scholarly communications landscape, with journal price increases outpacing library budgets, it is highly likely that Mason’s other large publisher journal packages will undergo changes in the future. Mason faculty are key partners in making any necessary changes, and we welcome their input. To that end, we are currently working with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Planning to conduct a survey of faculty and graduate students prior to our next round of big deal negotiations.

In the meantime, faculty may contact their [subject librarian](#) or fill out this [feedback form](#) to share any questions or concerns.

¹ The total cost of the five packages fell in 2017 because, due to budget cuts, the Libraries unbundled a portion of the Taylor & Francis package.

² The projected total Big Deal cost for 2021 reflects (a) the contractual price of our 2021 Elsevier subscriptions pre-negotiations, (b) zero price increase for 2021 on our Taylor & Francis package, voluntarily offered by the publisher in light of budget pressures on libraries due to the pandemic, and (c) slight price reductions on our Wiley and Springer Nature packages, negotiated by the respective consortia, again due to the pandemic.

Appendix F

Motion Requesting Faculty Matters Committee to Propose Term to Tenure-line Pathway

Proposed by Tim Gibson

Whereas research and teaching are co-equal dimensions of intellectual life at this University.

Whereas research enriches instruction, and Instruction enriches research.

Whereas the Faculty Handbook recognizes the central role of teaching by offering two pathways to tenure: genuine excellence in teaching and genuine excellence in research.

Whereas the principle of tenure is necessary for the protection of academic freedom and the equal participation of faculty in shared governance.

We call on the Faculty Matters committee to:

1. Develop and propose an accessible, fair, and transparent application process for faculty appointed to a specific term to change their limited-term contract positions to tenure-line positions by direct appointment.
2. Develop and propose a tenure-review process for genuine excellence in teaching that is suitable for term faculty whose intellectual identities are centered on instruction and mentoring students.
3. Present a proposal for changing the Faculty Handbook to accomplish the above by March 2022.

Appendix G

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY'S STATEMENT OF EXPECTATIONS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

General

George Mason University ("Mason") strives to promote a collegial, transparent, and productive environment for our faculty and graduate students. Mason is committed to providing graduate students with a welcoming, safe, and professional environment in which to work and study that is free of exploitation, intimidation, and harassment.

Graduate students are members of a scholarly community. They should be treated in a civil, collegial, and respectful manner by faculty and staff and should likewise treat faculty and staff in the same way. This document describes the expectations for both faculty and graduate students in order to achieve that goal.

Additionally, per Mason Policies 1201, 1202, and 1203, Mason is committed to preventing discrimination based on any of the protected classifications described in those policies. It should be noted that nothing in this document shall be construed as being contrary to or inconsistent with Mason policies or procedures or applicable laws, nor does it create any legal rights. Colleges, Schools, and Departments may have additional guidelines to suit domain-specific needs.

For the purposes of this document, graduate students are defined as full-time or part-time students pursuing a Master's degree or Doctoral degree, as well as students pursuing a postgraduate diploma or certificate.

I. Expectations of Graduate Students:

Graduate students are expected to:

- Adhere to all College and University policies and procedures.
- Treat Mason faculty, staff, and other students in a respectful and collegial manner.
- Devote an appropriate amount of time and effort, consistent with guidance from graduate program directors and/or departments, toward the advanced degree within normative time.
- Uphold ethical norms in research and scholarship and provide accurate and honest reporting of research results, research methodology, and scholarship in accordance with Mason policies on research integrity (<https://oria.gmu.edu/>).
- Attend new student orientations.
- Proactively participate in the advisor-graduate student relationship.
- Comply with the Code of Student Conduct (<https://studentconduct.gmu.edu/our-process/university-policies/code-of-student-conduct/>) and the Honor Code (<https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/>).

II. Expectations for Treatment of Graduate Students

a. Educational Experience and Degree

Consistent with Student Code of Conduct and DHRM policy 2.35, *Civility in the workplace*, civility is the responsibility of all members of the Mason community. Graduate students should be treated in a respectful and collegial manner by Mason administrators, staff, and faculty. Discussion of the student among academic colleagues will be of a professional nature, will be limited to the student's academic success and well-being, and will not be made in a discriminatory or derogatory manner.

Graduate students should be provided with the requirements of their individual academic or professional development program. Graduate students shall not be exploited or be coerced into performing tasks unrelated to the requirements of their individual academic or professional development program or those described in their assistantship/employment agreements. Graduate students may refuse to perform tasks unrelated to the requirements of their individual academic or professional development program or described in their assistantship/employment agreements without the fear of reprisal.

Graduate students should be provided with information regarding available financial support including scholarships, fellowships, assistantships, and their selection and eligibility criteria.

Graduate students will not be expected to violate their religious beliefs in the performance of their work in the graduate program.

Graduate students (prospective and currently enrolled) should be informed of the “expected time to degree” and the “average time to degree” for their program.

Graduate students should be recognized as co-authors and co-owners of scholarly works and intellectual property to which they have made a significant contribution of ideas or research work.

Graduate students should receive credit and recognition for innovation(s) and intellectual and/or creative ideas developed by the student.

Graduate students should receive due credit and recognition for curriculum developed by the student, including but not limited to instructor on record, acknowledgement on syllabi, and other accepted academic norms.

Graduate students should receive an objective evaluation at least once per year, as well as regular feedback and guidance, concerning their academic performance and progress towards an advanced degree. Specifically:

- i. Graduate students should be notified of any deficiencies in their academic performance. When appropriate and when corrective measures are possible, students should be given specific recommendations and requirements needed to remedy their deficiencies, before action against the student is taken.
- ii. Evaluations of student academic performance and progress should be factual and specific, and should be shared with the graduate student within a reasonable period of time that is publicly defined by each academic program.

A written evaluation of performance on qualifying and comprehensive examinations should be provided to students, when such exams are required by the degree program. In the event of major examination failure or other unsatisfactory performance, reasoning for such assessment should be provided to the graduate student in a clear, written evaluation.

Any intent to terminate a student from a graduate program for academic reasons must be preceded by specific, written performance information in accordance with guidelines and policies established by Mason ([Graduate policies, Academic Termination AP.6.6.2](#)) and/or academic programs and distributed via program websites and student handbooks.

- i. There will be clear public guidelines for the termination of a graduate student from an academic program.

- ii. Programs will make publicly available the description of the exception request and appeal process by which a graduate student may challenge the academic program termination.

b. Advising, Mentorship, and Guidance

Graduate students should receive respectful mentorship as well as academic and professional guidance.

- i. Academic advisors/chairs/mentors and graduate students should meet at least once per semester to ensure that students receive regular feedback and guidance concerning their academic performance and professional development through a mutually agreeable schedule of conferences.
- ii. Graduate students should have their progress toward achieving an advanced degree evaluated in an objective manner and based on criteria that are understood by the graduate advisor and students. Guidance and feedback should be factual and specific, and should be shared with the student within a reasonable period of time. Annual written progress reports should be required of students with a response from the advisor.

Graduate students should be provided with accurate information when selecting a committee/dissertation chair and other members of their thesis/dissertation committees (where required). The process by which students select a chair and members of thesis/dissertation committees will be made publicly available to students.

If a graduate student wishes to change their committee/dissertation chair, then the department/program should work with them to find an alternative faculty member, if possible. Moreover, if a graduate student's committee/dissertation chair leaves Mason once the student's work is under way, the department/program, in consultation with the student, will provide the student with a new committee/dissertation chair.

III. Enforcement and Corrective Action

Failure by a member of the university community (e.g., faculty member or graduate student) to comply with these expectations may result in disciplinary actions, as appropriate. The University may also take appropriate action short of discipline (e.g., instituting a no-contact order, reassigning a student to a new advisor, or changing a work assignment) to remedy the situation.

If a graduate student feels that another member of the university community is not complying with these expectations, they should speak with their advisor, program director, and/or department chair regarding their concern(s).

Students may also utilize the appropriate university channels or procedures for reporting conduct that is inconsistent with University policies or this document, including:

- Program Directors: all concerns related to program policies and degree requirements or conduct of other students
- Department Chairs: all concerns related to course delivery, instructors, staff, and academic/research facilities
- Compliance, Diversity, and Ethics (<https://diversity.gmu.edu>): issues relating to protected class discrimination (Title VII) or gender/sexual misconduct (Title IX: <https://diversity.gmu.edu/title-ix> and <https://diversity.gmu.edu/title-ix/sexual-or-interpersonal-misconduct-report-form>)
- Disability Services: for reasonable accommodation due to a disability (<https://ds.gmu.edu/>)

- Employee Relations: treatment of a graduate teaching assistant, graduate research assistant, graduate professional assistant and graduate lecturer by faculty and staff (<https://hr.gmu.edu/employee-relations/>)
- Office of Research Integrity and Assurance (<https://oria.gmu.edu/>): issues relating to research misconduct
 - Please refer to Policy 4007 for issues related to research misconduct: <https://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/misconduct-in-research-and-scholarship/>
- Contact resolve@gmu.edu: For complaints about online course or program

DRAFT

Appendix H

Master Planning Steering Committee (Submitted by Zachary Schrag, Faculty Senate representative – March 31, 2021)

The Master Plan Steering Committee first convened in May 2020. The initial meetings featured detailed, oral presentations—accompanied by slides—by Dr. Gregory Janks of Dumont Janks, with some opportunities for questions. Those meetings did not include an explanation of the role of the Steering Committee.

On August 21, 2020, the committee first discussed its role in the campus master planning process. Dr. Janks explained that "At the completion of next month, Dumont Janks will summarize the options, and will circulate to committee for comment and review. That report will close out this first phase of work."

At the September 4, 2020, meeting, Dr. Janks set October 5, 2020, as the tentative deadline for draft distribution of the Phase 1 report. His presentation included a slide showing a comment period running from October 5-18, 2020.

On October 2, 2020, the committee met again. At this meeting, Tobi Anne Walsh, Assistant Vice President, Capital Strategy & Planning, explained that the report would not be ready as planned, and that senior leadership would have a chance to comment before the steering committee saw the report. Dr. Janks stated that adding "a couple of months to the investigative phase" would not harm the overall schedule. The steering committee did not meet again until February 12, 2021.

On January 20, 2021, the Faculty Senate representatives asked about the status of the draft report. Laura Manno, Director, Strategic Academic & Research Facilities Planning, replied that "Regarding the Phase 1 draft report for review and comment, we are targeting sharing that draft by the end of February. We'd like to update the Steering Committee that first week in February since we have been away and then release the draft soon after."

At the February 12, 2021 meeting, Dr. Janks stated that the draft report would be ready at the end of February.

On March 30, 2021, we inquired again. Ms. Walsh replied that "The Phase 1 draft report was not compiled until Phase 1 officially ended on 3/2 at the Town Hall. The report is has presently completed 2 rounds of internal review and will next go to the SC once comments are incorporated from DJ, which should be any day now. We're presently on schedule per the attached plan from last Fall, and there is still plenty of time to capture comments that will impact the Master Plan."