1. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

The agenda was approved.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

a. Approval of the October 10, 2008 summary minutes

The minutes were approved as amended (B Jensen added to attendance list).

3. REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

3.1 FGSR Council Policy Review Committee: Leave of Absence; Program Extensions; Program Time Limits

The chair reported that the FGSR Council Policy Review Committee was now in place and is composed of M Shirvani (Dean, FGSR), L McGann (Assoc Dean, FGSR), H Hogg (Asst Dean, AFNS), N Kav (Graduate Coordinator, AFNS), B Lemire (Graduate Coordinator, Biochemistry), B Skrypnek (Graduate Coordinator, Human Ecology), B Whynot (President, GSA), C Couture (Graduate Ombudsperson). At the request of the Committee, M Shirvani agreed to chair.

It was noted that the Council Policy Review Committee can invite guests. For example, since Science and Engineering were not represented, volunteers from those faculties were invited to serve a term or a year on the committee.

N Kav presented the proposed policy changes which had been provided to Council. The major change proposed is for any approved leave of absence to ‘stop the clock’ for the graduate student. The Chair provided statistics on the last six and a half years of program extensions. Since FGSR Councilors believed that the proposed changes were advantageous, there was agreement to proceed with the motion at the meeting.

MOTION: It was moved by N Kav and seconded by L McGann that the proposed changes before Council be approved.

Council requested two amendments to the proposed changes:

- Pages 1 & 3: ‘...any approved leave of absence...’ amended to ‘...any FGSR approved leave of absence...’
- Page 2: ‘...approved by the supervisor/supervisory committee’ amended to ‘...approved by the supervisor and/or supervisory committee’

Amendments were friendly to the motion.

VOTE: The motion to approve the proposed changes was PUT and CARRIED, unanimously.
3.2 Dean’s Advisory Committee on Awards: QEII Graduate Scholarships: Department quotas update

In the discussion, the chair noted minimum requirements, e.g., at least a 3.3 GPA must remain, but that departments can elect to set a higher minimum GPA. FGSR will have the FGSR’s internal requirements ready for January 2009.

The Chair presented two potential formulas for distributing the QEII’s among departments, both using numbers of departments’ eligible students, past awards, etc., and applying different weighting to these categories. Councilors provided feedback on potential issues in using only eligible students versus total number of enrolled students, which awards to include in the department count, and if other criteria such as government-funded international students should be included as they also reflect the quality of a department. It was suggested that the formula include a minimum QEII award number per department, and that weighting should be assigned for each of the criteria to be used in the formula. Councilors requested a timely decision on the quotas since this would aid current recruitment efforts. FGSR will finalize the formula for the January 2009 Council meeting.

4. FORMAL BUSINESS

Proposal for a Master of Education in Health Sciences Education

MOTION: It was moved by M Allen and seconded by M Yahya that Council approve the Proposal for a Master of Education in Health Sciences Education.

A GSA representative noted that the budget predicts the student load doubling, but the RA funding increase is by only $800. The presenters noted that the enrollment estimates are accurate, but the budget needs to be revised and will be corrected.

VOTE: The motion to approve the proposal for a Master of Education in Health Sciences Education was PUT and CARRIED, 37-0, 6 abstentions.

5. INFORMAL BUSINESS

a. Question Period

A Councilor suggested that as the U of A has no official policies/guidelines on marking and grading of graduate-level courses, perhaps they should be developed by the FGSR. The Chair agreed that this should be reviewed and asked that the issue be addressed by the FGSR Policy Review Committee.

A guest from Mechanical Engineering requested that Council address the possibility of allowing students, particularly international students, to begin their programs of study in May (without penalty, i.e., payment of fees) and he outlined the advantages to this. He noted that several institutions allow for this, and the U of A is losing prospective students. Though some supervisors fund students during this time, not all departments have the budget to do so.