SUBJECT	Tuition Approval - Graduate Certificate in Genomic Counselling and Variant Interpretation
SUBMITTED TO	Finance Committee
MEETING DATE	April 6, 2020
SESSION CLASSIFICATION	Recommended session criteria from Board Meetings Policy: OPEN
ACTION REQUESTED	Please indicate requested Board action: Decision requested: approval of proposed resolution IT IS HEREBY REQUESTED that the Finance Committee, on behalf of the Board of Governors, approve tuition of $333.34 per credit for the 12-credit Graduate Certificate in Genomic Counselling and Variant Interpretation for both domestic and international students, effective September 2020.
SUBMISSION DATE	March 13, 2020
LEAD EXECUTIVE	Provost and Vice-President Academic (UBC Vancouver)
PRESENTED BY	Prof. Andrew Szeri, Provost and Vice-President, Academic (UBC Vancouver)
SUPPORTED BY	Dr. Pam Ratner, Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President, Enrolment & Academic Facilities Dr. Simon Bates, Associate Provost Teaching and Learning

PRIOR SUBMISSIONS

The subject matter of this submission has not previously been considered by the Finance Committee.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The online *Graduate Certificate in Genomic Counselling and Variant Interpretation* is proposed to offer post-professional training in genomic counselling and cutting-edge variant interpretation to Genetic Counsellors. Genetic Counsellors are highly skilled, M.Sc. or MS trained health professionals who care for patients and families who are at risk for, or have, serious genetic diseases by interpreting and explaining complex genetic information, empowering patients and families, navigating ethical challenges related to genetic testing, and supporting the wider healthcare team. Genetic Counsellors operate in nearly all areas of medicine, and beyond a clinical setting, have roles in research, industry, health policy, education, and management.

Pending Board of Governors and Senate approval, this certificate will launch in September 2020. The proposed tuition for the program is $333.34 per credit for both domestic and international students. All fees are subject to increases as approved by the Board of Governors.

Widespread use of genome sequencing for improving the diagnosis and clinical management of genetic disease has upended traditional genetics healthcare, resulting in increasingly complex demands on providers. Safe and effective clinical use of genomic testing requires professionals with advanced genomics training, as well as skills in family communication, facilitated decision-making, clinical interpretation, and supporting all healthcare team members, from specialists to testing companies. With genome-wide sequencing now in routine clinical use, Genetic Counsellors are expected to manage complex clinical tasks related to genomics daily. However, depending on the time since their initial training, specialization, and on-going education, even experienced Genetic Counsellors may lack professional competency in genomics. Numerous publications have issued calls to action for enhanced genomic training for Genetic Counsellors.

Genetic Counsellors who complete the proposed 12-credit certificate will fill a gap in the current workforce, and help to satisfy unmet needs in genomic healthcare in Canada and globally. Genomics was not a standard part of training for Genetic Counsellors prior to 2014, and most practicing Genetic Counsellors report learning what they know about variant interpretation from colleagues. Given the complexity of genomics, depending solely on peer co-learning poses major risks to patient safety and quality care.

The Certificate builds upon and complements the successful M.Sc. in Genetic Counselling program, the only such program in Western Canada, and no similar post-professional certificate is currently available in North America. The certificate positions UBC as a world leader in online learning in genomics while supporting the Faculty of Medicine's strategic plan, as well as strongly aligning with several strategies of the University's Strategic Plan including:

- Strategy 4: Inclusive Excellence by ensuring equitable learning opportunities through consistent tuition costs for domestic and international students, and securing need-based scholarships.
- Strategy 11: Education Renewal by offering a completely online program, and providing new teaching opportunities for Genetic Counsellors and postdoctoral fellows.
- Strategy 16: Public Relevance by responding to a national and international workforce need impacting patient care.
- Strategy 19: Global Networks by designing a program for domestic and international learners that encourages professional networking and future collaborations.

Genetic Counsellors will gain professional competency and the potential for increased career opportunities through completion of the Certificate. Acquiring specialized genomics skills may not result in higher pay in a current Genetic Counselling position, but opens up additional employment opportunities, including industry roles that generally provide higher pay. The interactive and collaborative nature of the Certificate will promote an international community of practice for genomic-skilled Genetic Counsellors, which may lead to future research and professional collaborations after completion of the program.

The Certificate was designed on the basis of survey results from 353 Genetic Counsellors practicing throughout the world. There are an estimated 7,000 trained Genetic Counsellors globally; approximately 5% of potential learners engaged in our online survey with 65.3% of respondents practicing outside Canada. 96% of respondents were interested in completing this certificate program. The Certificate Oversight Committee, responsible for the design and development of the program, includes six Genetic Counsellors who provide knowledge of current professional practice, as well as insight as potential students. One of these individuals is also a current PhD student at UBC, focusing on Genetic Counselling.

The Office of the Vice-President Students conducted a student consultation regarding the tuition proposal (as per Policy LR4). The e-consultation was conducted from February 1, 2020 to March 2, 2020. A submission responding to the tuition proposal was received from the Graduate Student Society, to which the Faculty responded. The GSS did not request any further follow up from the Faculty response. A submission from the AMS was also received.

Please note: This proposal is pending approval at the Graduate Curriculum Committee (Mar 13th), Senate Curriculum Committee (Mar 30th), and will be presented to Senate for information on April 15th.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

1. Tuition and Fee Assessment Details
2. Student Tuition Consultation Report

Tuition and Fee Assessment Details

Program Description: Graduate Certificate in Genomic Counselling and Variant Interpretation

Anticipated Start Date: September 2020

	Domestic	International
Tuition fees per credit – Note 1	$333.34	$333.34
Application Fees (Graduate) – Note 2	$108.00	$168.25
Non-Refundable Acceptance Deposit	N/A	N/A

Note 1 – Proposed tuition will be subject to increases as approved by the Board.

Note 2 – This is the current fee for the 2021W application cycle and is subject to increases as approved by the Board.

GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN GGENOMIC TESTING AND VARIANT INTREPRETATION STUDENT TUITION CONSULTATION REPORT

The Vice-President, Students Office, in partnership with the Faculty of Medicine, conducted a student consultation regarding the tuition proposal for a new online Graduate Certificate in Genomic Counselling and Variant Interpretation (OLAF). This report outlines the consultation process and summarizes student feedback including the student representative submissions verbatim in Appendix 2.

Student Representative Bodies Invited to the Consultation

- Alma Mater Society (AMS)
- Graduate Student Society (GSS)

Mode of Consultation

The consultation consisted of an e-consultation and a face-to-face meeting. Student representative groups were invited to the consultation through email, and asked to distribute the invitation to their constituents as they felt appropriate. Student representative groups were also offered a face-to-face meeting to discuss the tuition proposal. A meeting was not requested by student representatives.

Basis of Consultation: The consultation was based on a tuition proposal and rationale document created by the Faculty of Medicine. Please see Appendix 1 for the invitation and tuition rationale document.

Timelines: The e-consultation was conducted over the period of 1ST February to 2nd March.

Summary of Student Feedback: A submission was received from the GSS and AMS. The Faculty of Medicine provided a response to questions posed. The verbatim submissions and response are in Appendix 2.

Organization	Summary
GSS	**RECOMMENDATION TO REDUCE CLASS SIZE** "Since this certificate will be offered on an online platform, we want to ensure students receive the attention and feedback they need from instructors, so they are able to meaningfully participate in online debates and activities. Therefore, we would like some additional information on the rationale behind class sizes to provide reassurance that students will receive the best possible academic experience." **CLARITY ON INTERNATIONAL FEE STRUCTURE** "We ask for clarification on the International Application fee, which currently sits $60.00 higher than the Domestic Application fee. The program does an excellent job of emphasizing financial accessibility and we would like to understand why there is an additional $60.00 fee placed on International applicants."
AMS	**LOWER TUITION LEVELS A FLEXIBILITY APPRECIATED** "As demonstrated in the tuition consultation, this new program appears to be less expensive than others similar type programs. The AMS appreciates this notation on the part of UBC, as affordability is still one of the primary issues and barriers that UBC students face. Additionally, the AMS appreciates the flexibility this program will offer in terms of completion (4 courses over 1 year) to include equitable and accessible opportunities for both current students and full-time, applicable working professionals who want to further their education in this field."

No individual student submissions were received.

APPENDIX 1: INVITATION TO CONSULTATION AND TUITION RATIONALE DOCUMENT

Good morning,

There is a submission by the Faculty of Medicine to create a Graduate Certificate in Genomic Counselling and Variant Interpretation (OLAF).

In order to inform the program leads and the Board of Governors with regards to the **tuition proposal** for this program, the University is undertaking a consultative process to get your comments as student representatives, and provide an opportunity for students to provide individual comments on the tuition proposal if they wish. **Please note: the scope of this consultation process is limited to the tuition proposal.**

The consultation consists of:

1. e-consultation
Please find attached a document that outlines the details of the tuition proposal, including:

- an overview of the program,
- consultation to date,
- tuition rationale for the program, and
- the proposed tuition.

Please share the document and this email as you see appropriate. **Comments on the tuition proposal and student organization submissions can be provided confidentially to: Natasha Moore – Planning and Evaluation Advisor, Vice President Students Office (natasha.moore@ubc.ca).**

2. Face to Face meeting
If requested by student representatives, we can arrange a face-to-face meeting with the program leads regarding this tuition proposal. Please advise as soon as possible if you would like us to arrange a meeting.

THE CONSULTATION PROCESS WILL END MONDAY 2ND MARCH.

Confidentiality
Comments will be collected by the Vice-President Students Office, and only analysts within that office will know the identity of individual students submitting comments. At no time will anyone outside of the Vice President Students Office know the identity of individual students who submit comments to this consultation. Your comments will only be used for the purposes of the tuition consultation.

Comments from individual students will be stripped of any identifying information to ensure confidentiality, but otherwise will be provided to the responsible program leads and Board of Governors verbatim.

Comments received from student organizations will be reported as coming from those organizations, and provided to the responsible faculty and Board of Governors as received. There will also be a summary report of the consultation developed for the Faculty and Board of Governors.

If you have any questions about this process, please contact Natasha Moore at natasha.moore@ubc.ca

Natasha

NEW PROGRAM TUITION CONSULTATION TEMPLATE

Faculty of Medicine – Graduate Certificate in Genomic Counselling and Variant Interpretation

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Graduate Certificate in Genomic Counselling and Variant Interpretation (OLAF) is an online, four course (12 credit), post-professional program for Genetic Counsellors who desire additional training in genomics, specifically increased competency in genomic counselling and cutting-edge variant interpretation. Genetic Counsellors are highly skilled, M.Sc. or MS trained health professionals who care for patients and families who are at risk for, or have, serious genetic diseases by interpreting and explaining complex genetic information, empowering patients and families, navigating ethical challenges related to genetic testing, and supporting the wider healthcare team. Genetic Counsellors operate in nearly all areas of medicine, and beyond a clinical setting, have roles in research, industry, policy, education, and management. Genetic Counsellors are key members of the clinical genetics community, which will lead patients and healthcare workers in the precision medicine revolution, but this will require extension of traditional practice competencies to include competencies in genomics.

Widespread use of clinical genome sequencing has upended traditional medical genetics paradigms, resulting in increasingly complex demands for healthcare providers. Delivering genomic healthcare is more than genomic testing, and individuals with advanced genomics training, as well as family communication, facilitated decision-making, and clinical interpretation skills are in high demand. With genomic wide sequencing now ubiquitous, Genetic Counsellors are expected to manage complex genomic-related tasks daily. However, dependent on their time since graduation, specialization, and on-going education, experienced Genetic Counsellors may lack sufficient genomic skills for professional competency. Numerous publications have issued calls to action for enhanced genomic training for Genetic Counsellors.

The 12-credit Certificate is composed of four courses, two focused on computational analysis (bioinformatics) and clinical interpretation of genomic test results (MEDG 580, 585), and two focused on patient and family counselling regarding genomic results (MEDG 590, 595). Each course, consisting of 39 contact hours, is offered once per academic year. All courses will be taught through a flexible, interactive online learning environment and employ a patient-centered approach, drawing from real-world cases to provide authentic knowledge application within a multidisciplinary healthcare setting. Each course includes case-based learning, multimedia instructional presentations from subject matter experts, application assignments, and evaluations. The Certificate builds upon and complements the successful UBC M.Sc. Genetic Counselling training programs, the only such program in Western Canada. But, the Certificate is not an alternative or substitute for a M.Sc. or MS degree in Genetic Counselling.

By enhancing the genomic knowledge and skills of Genetic Counsellors, the Certificate will fill an educational gap in the current workforce to help satisfy unmet needs in genomic healthcare in Canada and globally. Genomic training for Genetic Counsellors was not standard prior to 2014, and most practicing Genetic Counsellors report learning variant interpretation from colleagues. Given the complexity of genomics, depending solely on informed peer co-learning poses major risks to quality of care and patient safety. A thoughtfully planned, comprehensive curriculum is required, as our program is designed to provide.

A similar professional training program is not currently available in Canada. The Certificate positions the Department of Medical Genetics and UBC as world leaders in online learning in genomics while supporting the Faculty of Medicine's *Leading Precision Health* strategic initiative in research and education.

Domestic and International Genetic Counsellors will gain professional competency and the potential for increased career opportunities through completion of the Certificate. Acquiring specialized genomics skills may not result in higher pay in a current Genetic Counselling position, but opens up additional employment opportunities, including higher paying industry roles. The interactive and collaborative nature of the Certificate will promote an international community of practice for genomic-skilled Genetic Counsellors, which may lead to collaboration in research and other endeavours outside the scope of the program.

STUDENT CONSULTATION DURING THE PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The Certificate was designed based on survey results from 353 Genetic Counsellors practicing throughout the world. There are an estimated 7000 trained Genetic Counsellors globally; approximately 5% of potential learners engaged in our online survey. 65.3% or respondents were international, practicing outside Canada. 96% of respondents to the survey were interested in completing this certificate program.

The Certificate Oversight Committee, responsible for the design and development of the program, includes six Genetic Counsellors who provide insight as potential students. One of these individuals is also a current PhD student at UBC, focusing on Genetic Counselling.

TUITION AND FEES RATIONALE

Proposed tuition for the program is $333.34 per a credit for Domestic and International students, totalling $1000 per a 3-credit course. If a student completed all four 3-credit courses in the Certificate, their total paid tuition would be $4000. As the certificate employs a modular course design, students are only expected to pay for the course they enroll in.

86% of potential learners responding to the global survey indicated a willingness to pay for a certificate program (4 courses) if it was priced at $4,000 CAD or less. Only 13% of respondents would pay $4,000-$6,000 CAD for the same certificate program. In the general comments section of the survey, 30% of respondents raised cost as an important element in considering their interest in the Certificate. Based on the survey responses and the availability of other ongoing education opportunities for certified Genetic Counsellors, we feel very strongly that higher credit pricing would result in a low enrollment rate.

We anticipate learners will be balancing full-time work with the Certificate, and may have limited funding to complete all courses within one year. Therefore, a modular online course design will provide flexibility to students to enable full engagement in course material and learning process. Although approximately 85% of Genetic Counsellors receive employer support for continuing education, as it is typically a requirement to maintain board certification, the average employer educational funding in North America is $1000/year.

We anticipate significant interest in the Certificate from Genetic Counsellors trained or working outside Canada, and feel strongly that cost should not be a barrier to learning. This is an opportunity for the UBC genetics community to contribute to global health, and to have an international influence. Higher international tuition rates would be particularly prohibitive to Genetic Counsellors from some of the lesser affluent nations where we know there is interest. Approximately 12% of respondents to our survey reported worked in a middle to low income country per World Bank classification.

We strongly believe our commitment to developing a financially accessible program for both International and Domestic students was a key reason the Certificate was selected for funding from the Online Learning Advancement Fund (OLAF) through Extended Learning at UBC. Given the design of the Certificate where students take a single course per a semester, they will not be eligible to access financial aid or other University bursaries. In congruence with UBC's Next Century Strategy to foster global citizenship, two scholarships have been secured to enable participation by International students, and more scholarship funding is being pursued for Domestic students.

We anticipate that each course will have a cohort of 40-50 students. Capping student enrollment will enable a personalized learning experience, permitting labour intensive instructional methods like debates, which will strengthen the individual learning experience and international community of scholars.

Key factors influencing program tuition:

- Potential-student survey results indicating realistic enrollment rates at set tuition.
- Commitment to developing a global community of genomic-trained Genetic Counsellors and desire to make this Certificate open to Genetic Counsellors from lower-middle income countries.
- Cost of other similar but less thorough educational programs currently available, demand for professional continuing education, and average employer financial support for ongoing education.
- Established precedence for near equal Domestic and International tuition rates for Graduate Certificates.
- Minimum tuition rates as indicated by Faculty of Medicine financial review process for Certificate program viability.

Tuition Benchmarking

No similar program in available in North America for completely comparable benchmarking. However, several reasonable comparisons are listed below.

Table 1: Per-credit tuition for all other UBC Graduate Certificate Programs based on Board approved 2019/20 rates for new incoming students (At this time, 2020/21 fees are not available online).

Program	**Domestic per-credit rate**	**International per-credit rate**
UBC Graduate Certificates		
Proposed Graduate Certificate in Genomic Counselling and Variant Interpretation	*$333.34*	*$333.34*
Graduate Certificate in Orientation and Mobility	$364.24	$736.01
Graduate Certificate in Rehabilitation Science	$426.61	$434.98
Graduate Certificate in Global Surgical Care	$451.01	$939.49
Graduate Certificate in Adult Learning and Education	$462.97	$591.76
Graduate Certificate in Higher Education	$462.97	$591.76
Graduate Certificate in Indigenous Public Health	$510.00	$624.00
Graduate Certificate in Orthopaedic and Manipulative Physical Therapy	$534.23	$544.47
Graduate Certificate in High Performance Coaching and Technical Leadership	$555.64	$895.13
Graduate Certificate in Global Mine Waste Management	$1670.00	$1670.00

Table 2: Fees for post-professional genomics education programs for medical health professionals listed by program length. Please note, fees were intentionally not translated to Canadian dollars as currency rates frequently fluctuate.

Institution	Program Name	Program Length	Program tuition (Domestic)	Program tuition (International)
Canada:				
UBC	*Proposed Graduate Certificate in Genomic Counselling and Variant Interpretation*	*1 year (4 courses)*	*$4000.00 CAD*	*$4000.00 CAD*
International:				
National Society of Genetic Counsellors (NSGC)	Variant Interpretation in the Era of WGS/WES Online Education	3.60 hours	$75 USD for members, $100 USD for non-members	$75 USD for members, $100 USD for non-members
NSGC	Exome 101, Online Education	3.82 hours	$75 USD for members, $100 USD for non-members	$75 USD for members, $100 USD for non-members
NSGC	Other Areas of Genomic Medicine Online Education	4.63 hours	$75 USD for members, $100 USD for non-members	$75 USD for members, $100 USD for non-members
American College of Medical Genetics and Genomics (ACMG)	2019 ACMG Genetics and Genomics Review Course on Demand	21.5 hours	$795.00 USD for members, $895.00 for non-members	$795.00 USD for members, $895.00 for non-members
Wellcome Genome Campus	Genomic Practice for Genetic Counsellors	3 days	£382 including shared accommodation	£382 including shared accommodation
Wellcome Genome Campus	Clinical Genomics: Fundamental Variant Interpretation in Clinical Practice	3 days	£440 including accommodation	£440 including accommodation

Jointly organized by the European School of Genetic Medicine (ESGM), European Society of Human Genetics (ESHG), and University Residential Center of Bertinoro (CEUB)	Clinical Genomics and NGS	6 days	€780.00 including meals and transportation	€780.00 including meals and transportation
National Health Service (NHS), Genomic Education Programme	Genomic Medicine Framework – modules, postgraduate certificate or diploma or Master's degree	6 weeks per a module	Free (funded by employer)	Only open to employees of the NHS
University of Florida	Graduate Certificate in Precision Medicine	1 year (9 courses)	~$3852 USD	~$3852 USD
University of Cambridge, Institute of Continuing Education	Postgraduate Certificate in Genomic Medicine	1 year (4 courses)	£4,000.00	£9,000.00
University of Cambridge, Institute of Continuing Education	Postgraduate Diploma in Genomic Medicine	2 years (8 courses)	£8,000.00	£18,000.00
National Institute of Health (NIH) and ACMG	Fellowship in Genomic Medicine Program Management	2 years	Fellows will be paid a salary and benefits	Only open to US Citizens

PROPOSED TUITION AND FEES

Proposed tuition is $333.34 per a credit, translating to $1000 per 3-credit course for both Domestic and International students. Additional student expenses include application fees. Students are not expected to incur other expenses, for example travel costs.

	Domestic	International
Tuition fees per credit – Note 1	$333.34	$333.34
Application Fees (Graduate) – Note 2	$108.00	$168.25
Non-Refundable Acceptance Deposit	N/A	N/A

Note 1 – Proposed tuition will be subject to annual increases as established by the University.
Note 2 – This is the current fee for the 2021W application cycle and is subject to annual increases.

APPENDIX 2: STUDENT SUBMISSIONS AND FACULTY RESPONSE

There was a submission from the GSS and AMS, and a response from the Faculty.

SUBMISSION FROM GSS AND AMS

ams
— EST. 1915 —

Submission to the UBC Board of Governors regarding the Tuition for the Graduate Certification of Genomic Counselling and Variant Interpretation

March 2nd, 2020

Dear Board of Governors,

This submission is made on behalf of the Alma Mater Society of UBC Vancouver (AMS) in response to the feedback request from the Vice President Students Office on the Graduate Certification of Genomic Counselling and Variant Interpretation.

The AMS applauds this innovative graduate certification opportunity. This is an exciting new program that will attract diverse graduate students to UBC. The current assessed tuition fees for this program (which is $4000 or $333.34 per credit totalling for 12 credits) appears fair when compared to other 'proxy' or similar programs globally, that are less thorough educational in content, than this proposed program. The AMS understand that because this is a unique and more comprehensive certificate program that there was no direct comparison to be made with other programs and 'proxy' or similar programs had to be used in the assessment.

As demonstrated in the tuition consultation, this new program appears to be less expensive than others similar type programs. The AMS appreciates this notation on the part of UBC, as affordability is still one of the primary issues and barriers that UBC students face. Additionally the AMS appreciates the flexibility this program will offer in terms of completion (4 courses over 1 year) to include equitable and accessible opportunities for both current students and full-time, applicable working professionals who want to further their education in this field. This modular online program appears to strike a fair balance between access, equity and costs for current or returning graduate students.

The AMS supports the implementation of this Certification of Genomic Counselling and Variant Interpretation. The AMS looks forward to being updated on bursaries and scholarships for this program for UBC students to continue ensuring its accessibility to students of all income levels.

The AMS thanks the University for soliciting student input in this process.

Sincerely,

Julia Burnham
Vice President Academic and University Affairs
AMS Student Society of UBC Vancouver
vpacademic@ams.ubc.ca

Thea Koerner House
225 - 6371 Crescent Rd. Vancouver
604.822.3203
gss.ubc.ca

Submission to the UBC Faculty of Medicine regarding the Tuition for the new Graduate Certificate in Genomic Counselling And Variant Interpretation

February 26, 2020

Dear Faculty,

This submission is sent on behalf of the Graduate Student Society of UBC in response to the feedback request from the UBC Academic and University Affairs Office on tuition for the creation of a 12-credit specialized graduate certificate program in Genomic Counselling and Variant Interpretation.

As a Society we try to provide feedback that reflects the dual desires of graduate students:

- That the University is able to meet its goal of providing outstanding and relevant programs for graduate students
- That graduate education at UBC should be affordable and accessible

We recognize that this new Certificate meets a significant need in the rapidly developing field of genetics. It is also a program that unites with UBC's mission of excellence in education, offering students access to the most current genomic information and skills, and providing interactive support from genomic professionals. We also appreciate that the program is structured to enhance the education of individuals currently working as Genetic Counsellors. The tuition consultation clearly demonstrated the need for ongoing education, which was backed up by reference to the publications in the wider community asking for enhanced training.

The proposed tuition for this online 12-credit certificate is $4,000, or $1000 per 3-credit course. The tuition consultation clarified this tuition was for both Domestic and International students, and goes on to specify the rationale behind this decision was to reduce the financial barriers for Genetic Counsellors practicing in low-income countries. We greatly appreciate this attention to affordability and we agree with the rationale behind this tuition-setting. The benchmarking provided by the consultation was thorough, despite the difficulties in finding comparable programs, and the consultation also clearly outlined the key factors influencing program tuition. Based on our own research we believe the proposed tuition is reasonable, however we look forward to hearing further information regarding bursary and scholarship information as we believe that scholarships and bursaries have an important role to play in making programs such as this accessible.

GRADUATE STUDENT SOCIETY
UBC VANCOUVER

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In sum, the GSS believes this is a thorough and well-reasoned document, and we are excited to see the implementation of this certificate. We have two minor recommendations to make.

Firstly, the tuition consultation states that class sizes will be capped at 40-50 students per course. We understand the need for ongoing education for Genetic Counsellors, however we are concerned classes of this size may prevent the interactive education as specified in the consultation. Since this certificate will be offered on an online platform, we want to ensure students receive the attention and feedback they need from instructors, so they are able to meaningfully participate in online debates and activities. Therefore, we would like some additional information on the rationale behind class sizes to provide reassurance that students will receive the best possible academic experience.

Secondly, we ask for clarification on the International Application fee, which currently sits $60.00 higher than the Domestic Application fee. The program does an excellent job of emphasizing financial accessibility and we would like to understand why there is an additional $60.00 fee placed on International applicants.

The GSS would like to thank the University for the opportunity to provide input in this process. We look forward to meeting the first students of the new Certificate and to see them succeed at UBC and in the global health community.

Sincerely,

Tarique Benbow
Vice President University & Academic Affairs
Graduate Student Society of UBC Vancouver
vpacademic@gss.ubc.ca

Prepared by Mimi Neufeld (Policy Assistant)
Graduate Student Society of UBC Vancouver

RESPONSE FROM FACULTY

Updated: 05/Mar/2020

Response to the Graduate Student Society re. Tuition Consultation
UBC Graduate Certificate in Genomic Counselling and Variant Interpretation

Dear Tarique and the Graduate Student Society,

Thank you for completing a thorough review of the proposed Graduate Certificate in Genomic Counselling and Variant Interpretation. We greatly appreciate your excitement and support for the certificate.

As you are aware, we are committed to providing a financially equitable program, and have secured two recurring student scholarships to date, a $500 stipend from Women's Health Research Institute at BC Women's Hospital, and a $2500 scholarship from the genetic testing company Prevention Genetics. We are actively seeking additional funding opportunities for both scholarships and bursaries, and plan to update our program website with progress in this matter, when available.

We are grateful for the helpful recommendations brought forward in your consultation summary letter, and we hope to address both points.

First, we are enthusiastic to provide students in the certificate program an excellent academic experience. The class size caps were chosen after consultation with the Faculty of Medicine, Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology, and Extended Learning. Most activities will be conducted in smaller sub-groups, facilitating greater interactions with peers and the Course Instructor. We believe that the good use of interactive tools and the thoughtful design of assignments will contribute to an intimate and supportive learning environment that facilitates classes of 50. All Course Instructors for the program will focus on teaching and supporting the students in a single course in any given semester, without other course teaching responsibilities.

We have also retained some budget flexibility to bring in additional subject matter expert facilitators or teaching assistants for certain activities, enabling more opportunities for small-group learning. We will employ these additional personal more extensively if there is feedback from the beta testers or the pilot cohort that the class size is limiting meaningful participation and support. Evaluations will be completed and assessed during beta testing, and at the end of each course. As student experience is a key marker for program success, we are keen to adjust our program based on student evaluations, and would be open to reducing the class size if needed. In this case, we could consider offering a course more frequently, to meet learner demand.

To the second point, the differentiated application fees for domestic and international learners are aligned with the UBC Board of Governors-approved 2019-2020 non-instructional fee schedule.

Sincerely,

Oversight Committee, Graduate Certificate in Genomic Counselling and Variant Interpretation