



SUBJECT	Tuition Doctor of Philosophy in Genetic and Genomic Counselling
SUBMITTED TO	Finance Committee
MEETING DATE	November 19, 2021
SESSION	Recommended session criteria from Board Meetings Policy:
CLASSIFICATION	OPEN
REQUEST	Action requested - Final approval IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED that the Finance Committee, in accordance with authority delegated by the Board of Governors, approves tuition for the Doctor of Philosophy in Genetic and Genomic Counselling of \$1,732.53 per instalment for domestic students and \$3,043.77 per instalment for international students (subject to increases as approved by the Board of Governors), with a minimum of six (6) instalments.
LEAD EXECUTIVE	Andrew Szeri, Provost and Vice-President, UBC Vancouver
SUPPORTED BY	Pam Ratner, Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President Faculty Planning Simon Bates, Associate Provost Teaching & Learning

PRIOR SUBMISSIONS

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Department of Medical Genetics in the Faculty of Medicine plans to offer a *Doctor of Philosophy in Genetic and Genomic Counselling*. First of its kind in Canada, it will develop researchers who generate knowledge through empirical research that will advance and inform evidence-based practice in the genetic counselling profession, resulting in improved health outcomes.

Genetic counsellors are master's-prepared healthcare professionals who represent the front line of genetic and genomic medicine. Currently there are five MSc training programs in Canada, of which UBC's two-year Master of Science in Genetic Counselling Program is one of the largest. The field and profession of genetic and genomic counselling is rapidly expanding. The US Bureau of Labor Statistics forecasted a 29% growth rate for genetic counselling jobs between 2014 and 2024, compared to an average rate of 7% across all occupations. In the 2019 Professional Status Survey of the National Society of Genetic Counsellors, of 2,439 respondents, only 2% held doctoral degrees, due to the lack of doctoral programs. Those with these degrees have earned them in programs with weak linkages (public health, biochemistry and medical genetics, neuroscience) to genetic and genomic counselling specifically. As the field and profession expands, there needs to be a place where genetic and genomic counsellors can train to become academic researchers capable of advancing the profession through the development of evidence-based practice including attention to the complex and evolving issues, both clinical and ethical, related to the expansion of genomic sequencing and the impact on precision health medicine and genetic services.

Pending approval by the UBC Board of Governors and the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training, the program aims to admit its first cohort of students in September 2022. The program was approved by the UBC Vancouver Senate in October 2021.

The proposed tuition is aligned with the tuition for standard doctoral degree programs, which for 2021-2022 is \$1,732.53 per instalment for domestic students and \$3,043.77 per instalment for international students with a minimum of six instalments. Continuing fees will be applied after the ninth instalment. These fees are subject to increases as approved by the Board of Governors.

Full-time graduate students will be provided with a yearly stipend of \$27,000. The stipend is anticipated mainly from the Research Supervisor's research grant. In addition, the program will preserve 5% of tuition revenue as student financial aid fund every year. The Department anticipates that many students in the program will be competitive for national funding (e.g. CIHR) and UBC fellowships (e.g. Four-year Fellowship).

The target audience for the program will be fully trained and clinically qualified genetic counsellors who have graduated from an accredited genetic counselling training program, who are board certified in Genetic Counselling, and who are motivated to pursue doctoral studies to become thought leaders in this emerging field. UBC anticipates admitting approximately three students each year to the program, with capacity to scale up as needed. Starting small will help to build demand alongside the process of launching and delivering the program.

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 September 16 to October 18, 2021 and sent to the Alma Mater Society (AMS), Graduate Student Society (GSS) and Medical Genetics Graduate Student Association. A submission from the AMS and GSS was received. The AMS noted they were in favour of this proposed program and felt the proposal shows the potential to consolidate the international stature of BC and UBC as world-leaders for genetic and genomic counselling. The GSS also noted their support for the program but commented on the programs plans to not offer the International Tuition Awards (ITA) to international students. The program has since confirmed with the GSS that all international students will be offered the ITA where eligible. They also provided additional recommendations about the how the program could increase affordability for students and the Faculty will consider these recommendations as the program develops.

Key elements of this specialization that are in alignment with UBC's strategic plan include:

- [Strategy 1: Great People](#): Enable the recruitment of top calibre students from across Canada, North America and globally. There is already international interest in this program.
- [Strategy 10: Research Culture](#): Foster a strong and diverse research culture through ongoing partnerships with provincial partners including the Ministry of Health, Provincial Health Services Authority (Provincial Laboratory Medicine Services; Virtual Health) and other stakeholders including BC Women's Research Health Institute, BC Children's Hospital Research Institute, BC Cancer Agency, Michael Smith Health Research BC, and Genome BC. UBC is already home to GenCOUNSEL, the largest research genetic counselling grant ever awarded. We will leverage pre-existing Canadian and international research and clinical collaborations through this initiative, including primary care programs.
- [Strategy 11: Education Renewal](#): Through the establishment of the PhD program we anticipate inspiring students who undertake MSc training in genetic counselling - at UBC and beyond - to continue their academic path by undertaking a thesis-based research PhD, thus creating the critical mass necessary to truly establish genetic counselling as an academic discipline in its own right. We will also leverage existing programs such as the UBC Online Certification for Genomic Counselling for practicing genetic counsellors.

APPENDICES

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

Tuition and Fee Assessment Details

Program Description: Doctor of Philosophy in Genetic and Genomic Counselling

Anticipated Start Date: September 2022

	Domestic	International
Tuition fees per instalment ¹	\$1,732.53	\$3,043.77
Minimum number of instalments	6	6
Continuing fees per instalment (assessed after 9 instalments)	\$791.53	\$3,043.77
Application fees (Graduate) ²	\$110.00	\$168.25
Non-refundable acceptance deposit	N/A	N/A
Other faculty and course fees	N/A	N/A

¹ Proposed tuition is aligned with 21/22 tuition for standard doctoral degree programs and will be subject to annual increases as established by the university. Tuition and student fees are charged in three equal instalments payable in January, May and September.

² This is the current fee for the 2022W application cycle and is subject to increases as approved by the Board.

PHD IN GENETIC AND GENOMIC COUNSELLING

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 the PhD in Genetic and Genomic Counselling. This report outlines the consultation process and summarizes student feedback including the student representatives' submission verbatim in Appendix 2.

Student Representative Bodies Invited to the Consultation

- Alma Mater Society (AMS)
- Graduate Student Society (GSS)
- Medical Genetics Graduate Student Association (MGGSA)

Mode of Consultation

The consultation consisted of an e-consultation and optional 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 September 16th to October 18th, 2021.

Summary of Student Feedback: Submissions were received from the AMS and GSS. The verbatim submissions are in Appendix 2. No individual student submissions were received.

Organization	Summary
AMS	<p>Support for proposed program</p> <p>"The Alma Mater Society is in favour of this proposed program addition. We believe the Ph.D. in Genetic and Genomic Counselling contains a curriculum enhances the strength and rigour of genetic and genomic counselling as an academic discipline in Canada. The program has clearly shown the potential to consolidate the international stature of BC and UBC as world-leaders for genetic and genomic. Furthermore, the Alma Mater Society appreciates UBC's extensive effort to explore the prospective student interest in and demand for the programm[sic]"</p>
GSS ¹	<p>Support for proposed program</p> <p>"This is a great initiative. GSS believe a Ph.D. in Genetic and Genomic Counselling will be an important addition to the field. We fully support the new program and thank the faculty for making this come to light"</p> <p>Revise the stipend in accordance with rise in tuition fees</p> <p>"A major concern area for prospective students would be increasing tuition fees with a static stipend. This is likely to push students to considering US alternatives rather than UBC. We could be addressed at the Dept. of Genetics and Faculty of Medicine. Or even be brought to the attention of the UBC Finance Committee."</p>

¹ The Faculty responded to all the concerns raised by GSS. Some are beyond the scope of the Program but the Faculty did confirm that students in the program will be eligible for the International Tuition Award and they are open to working with GSS to explore work opportunities for students. The verbatim responses can be found at the end of Appendix 2.

	<p>Internal Funding and the International Tuition Award “While this may be addressed, it’s unclear on whether inapplicability of UBC funding is owing to a UBC regulation...Assuming it is a decision by the Faculty of Medicine, the GSS believes that this issue could as well be brought to the Board or members of the Finance Committee”</p> <p>Creating work opportunities “At the GSS we are open to discuss possibilities of developing Work-Learn/Graduate Research positions for Genetic Counsellors with the Dept. of Genetics and Faculty of Medicine”</p> <p>Tuition waivers “Most universities provide for tuition waivers, especially for gifted candidates or impressive applicants – this is creating a point of competition with US schools as well. Seeing as there is no provision for this in the proposal, the GSS proposes that the Faculty of Medicine & Dept. of Genetics to consider such an avenue or strengthen the current senate recommendations on new PhD admissions”</p> <p>Revising the continuation fee for international students “Continuation fees that are equivalent to the ‘per semester fee’ adversely affect students from Lower- & Middle-Income countries...This takes away from the goal of reputation building – we would want to continue attracting the best minds to UBC and allow them to deliver greatly”</p>
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APPENDIX 1: INVITATION TO CONSULTATION AND TUITION RATIONALE DOCUMENT

Hello everyone,

There is a proposal by the Faculty of Medicine to create a new **PhD in Genetic and Genomic Counselling** program.

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 will consist of:

1. e-consultation

Please find attached a document which outlines the details of the tuition proposal, including:

- an overview of the program,
- the student consultation that has happened to date,
- the tuition rationale for the program, and
- the proposed tuition

Please share the document and this email as you see appropriate. **Comments and student organization submissions on the tuition proposal can be provided to Tlell Elviss – Senior Program Strategist, Vice President Students Office (tlell.elviss@ubc.ca).**

2. Face to Face/Zoom meeting

If requested by student representatives, we can arrange a face-to-face/Zoom 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 ON MONDAY, OCTOBER 18TH, 2021 AT MIDNIGHT.

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.

Please let me know if you have any questions about the process.

Thank you,

Tlell

PHD IN GENETIC AND GENOMIC COUNSELLING

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Department of Medical Genetics, in the Faculty of Medicine, is developing a proposal to offer a *PhD in Genetic and Genomic Counselling*. Pending approvals, their aim is to launch the program in September 2022. First of its kind in Canada, the PhD will develop researchers who generate knowledge through empirical research that will advance and inform evidence-based practice in the genetic counselling profession, resulting in improved health outcomes.

Genetic counsellors are Master's-trained allied health care professionals who represent the front line of genetic and genomic medicine. The field and profession of genetic and genomic counselling is rapidly expanding. Precision health (e.g. genome sequencing, sequencing of a person's entire genetic code) is transforming clinical care. Genome sequencing is a powerful technology that can diagnose patients with suspected genetic disorders and can customize treatment. Precision health is advancing in many disciplines of medicine at a rapid pace. The expansion of clinical genome sequencing requires additional and innovative methods to cope with the increased demand for genomic counselling to enable access and optimize patient-centered care. Canadian, European and American guidelines state genetic counselling is essential with genome sequencing implementation.

Currently there are five MSc training programs in Canada, of which UBC's two-year [Master of Science in Genetic Counselling Program](#) is one of the largest. The US Bureau of Labor Statistics forecasted a 29% growth rate for genetic counselling jobs between 2014 and 2024, compared to an average rate of 7% across all occupations. In the 2019 Professional Status Survey of the National Society of Genetic Counsellors, out of 2,439 respondents, only 2% held doctoral degrees, due to the lack of doctoral programs in genetic and genomic counselling. Those with these degrees have earned them in programs with weak linkages (e.g., public health, biochemistry and medical genetics, neuroscience) to genetic and genomic counselling specifically. As the field and profession expands, there needs to be a place where genetic and genomic counsellors can train to become academic researchers capable of advancing the profession through the development of evidence-based practice including attention to the complex and evolving issues, both clinical and ethical, related to the expansion of genomic sequencing.

The target audience for the PhD program (and academic requirements for entry into the program) will be fully-trained and clinically-qualified genetic counsellors who have graduated from an accredited genetic counselling training program, who are board certified in Genetic Counselling, and who are motivated to pursue doctoral studies to become thought leaders in this emerging field.

The Department anticipates admitting three students each year to the program, with capacity to scale up as needed. Starting small will help to build demand alongside the process of launching and delivering the program. They expect to have one international student enrolled in year 1.

Overall Program Goals

- Enhance the strength and rigour of genetic and genomic counselling as an academic discipline in Canada.
- Improve the evidence base for genetic counselling practice in the era of genomic medicine.
- Consolidate the international stature of BC and UBC as world-leaders for genetic and genomic counselling, genomics and translational medicine.

STUDENT CONSULTATION DURING THE PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The Department, with support from the Centre for Teaching, Learning, and Technology, conducted a market survey in 2019 among practicing genetic counsellors in Canada and current UBC graduate students in genetics. The response rate was impressive with 298 respondents (of which 235 were practicing genetic counsellors and 35 current students. For reference, there are approximately 500 genetic counsellors in Canada) with overwhelming support for this initiative. 90% of respondents felt this program fulfilled a need and 80% felt this degree could help advance their career. Quotes submitted include:

- *Several genetic counsellors are interested in research and want to pursue advanced degrees but are perhaps deterred by the need to turn to other fields or not be able to complete a PhD in a program that meets all of their needs/interests.*
- *On behalf of our entire profession, I want to sincerely thank you for embarking on this hugely important endeavour which will transform our field for the next 50 years.*
- *A PhD would open doors in research avenues, public policy/government career opportunities and academic careers that involve teaching and research.*
- *For genetic counselors to engage in careers as independent investigators, this kind of training is necessary. And it is necessary for the genetic counseling profession to mature to have genetic counselors in careers as independent investigators - as evidenced by the history of nursing.*

While only 45% indicated they would be likely to undertake doctoral studies, for those that are interested, 76% indicated they would choose this PhD over another.

TUITION AND FEES RATIONALE

The proposed tuition for this program is aligned with the tuition for standard doctoral degree programs, which for 21/22 is \$1,732.53 per instalment for domestic students and \$3,043.77 per instalment for international students with a minimum of 6 instalments. Continuing fees will be applied after the 9th instalment. These fees are subject to increases as approved by the Board of Governors.

Full time graduate students will be provided with yearly stipend of \$27,000. The stipend is anticipated mainly from the Research Supervisor's research grant. In addition, the program will preserve 5% of tuition revenue as student financial aid fund every year. As the stipend is higher than the full international tuition fee, no ITA (international students award) will be provided.

The program will typically require at least 48 months of full-time study. A total of 18 credit hours will be required during the first year, including a novel two-term required course (totalling 6 credits) in "Research Topics in Genetic Counselling." UBC's online certification course in [genomic counselling and variant interpretation](#) will provide elective course opportunities for PhD students with a genomics focus to their research, and other graduate course that are available through the Medical Genetics Graduate Program, Genome Sciences and Technology Graduate Program, Social Work, Psychology and Health Economics will also be available to students as electives.

Courses will be delivered in various forms including didactic lecture, online learning, group discussions, student presentations and independent study and research, and primarily take place at UBC's Children's and Women's Hospital Campus in Vancouver using research facilities within the BC Children's Hospital Research Institute and the Women's Health Research Institute.

Comparator Programs

Currently there are no other institutions in Canada offering a PhD in Genetic and Genomic Counselling. The three most comparable programs in the US are:

Institution	Program	Program length	Domestic tuition rate	International tuition rate
University of Pittsburg	PhD in Human Genetics, Genetic Counselling Focus	Avg. 2-3 years	\$28,402 USD per year	\$45,512 USD per year
University of Minnesota	Joint Degree Program in Molecular, Cellular, Developmental Biology and Genetics PhD/MS in Genetic Counseling	Avg. 14-15 semesters	\$8,922.00 USD per semester	\$13,806.00 USD per semester
Virginia Commonwealth University	Dual Ph.D. in Human Genetics and M.S. in Genetic Counselling Degree	Avg. 5-6 years	MSc: \$12,618 USD per year PhD: \$10,404 USD per year	MSc: \$25,956 USD per year PhD: \$22,212 USD per year

PROPOSED TUITION AND FEES

Program Description: PhD in Genetic and Genomic Counselling

Anticipated Start Date: September 2022

	Domestic	International
Tuition fees per instalment Note 1	\$1,732.53	\$3043.77
Minimum No. of Instalments	6	6
Continuing Fees per Instalment (assessed after 9 instalments)	\$791.53	\$3,043.77
Application Fees (Graduate) – Note 2	\$110.00	\$168.25
Non-Refundable Acceptance Deposit	N/A	N/A
Other Faculty and Course Fees	N/A	N/A

Note 1 – Proposed tuition is aligned with 21/22 tuition for standard doctoral degree programs and will be subject to annual increases as established by the university. Tuition and student fees are charged in three equal instalments payable in January, May and September.

Note 2 – This is the current fee for the 2022W application cycle and is subject to annual increases.

APPENDIX 2: STUDENT SUBMISSIONS AND FACULTY RESPONSE

Below is the verbatim submission from the AMS.



RE: New Ph. D. in Genetic and Genomic Counselling Program

Dear members of the UBC Board of Governors,

This submission is being made on behalf of the Alma Mater Society (AMS) of UBC Vancouver in response to the request for feedback on the new proposal by the Faculty of Medicine to create a new Ph.D. in Genetic and Genomic Counselling.

The Ph.D. in genetic and genomic counselling will be the first of its kind in Canada. The PhD will develop researchers who generate knowledge through empirical research that will advance and inform evidence-based practice in the genetic counselling profession, resulting in improved health outcomes.

The Alma Mater Society is in favour of this proposed program addition. We believe the Ph.D. in Genetic and Genomic Counselling contains a curriculum that enhances the strength and rigour of genetic and genomic counselling as an academic discipline in Canada. The program has clearly shown the potential to consolidate the international stature of BC and UBC as world-leaders for genetic and genomic. Furthermore, the Alma Mater Society appreciates UBC's extensive effort to explore the prospective student interest in and demand for the program.

The AMS would like to sincerely thank the Faculty of Medicine for their commitment to ensuring that student voices are heard. We hope to see this continue and look forward to working with UBC to make education affordable and accessible to UBC students across all levels. We also appreciate the Board's consideration of this submission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eshana Bhangu'.

Eshana Bhangu

Vice President, Academic and University Affairs
Alma Mater Society

Below are the two verbatim submissions from the GSS.

Hi Tlell,

I hope you consider this as a part of GSS consultation piece, we truly apologize for the late response, we are unfortunately operating with one officer less (VPUAA)

This is a great initiative. GSS believe a Ph.D. in Genetic and Genomic Counselling will be an important addition to the field. We fully support the new program and thank the faculty for making this come to light.

The funding package is pretty good too, though we don't totally agree with the suggestion that since the package is bigger than tuition fees, no International Students Award (ITA) will be provided. We think the fee is lower than the other schools that may have been quoted especially from schools that are running the same program with lower fees.

Overall, we think it is a great program and that you could reconsider decision on ITA, that will be great.

Best,

Kimani wa Karangu (He/Him/His)

President

E: president@gss.ubc.ca



**GRADUATE
STUDENT SOCIETY
UBC VANCOUVER**

Thea Koerner House
225 – 6371 Crescent Road, Vancouver
T: [604.822.3203](tel:604.822.3203)
gss.ubc.ca

We acknowledge the land on which we work is the unceded and occupied traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̪əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.



2021-10-21

PhD in Genetic and Genomic Counselling: A GSS Proposal Review

This report contains a comparative analysis of existing programs in Genetic Counselling in terms of costs and duration.

The focus of this report is to provide recommendations that can bolster the international stature of UBC as a global institution of repute for genetic and genomic counselling, genomics and translational medicine and make BC a more attractive destination for international students.

Comparative Study

There are currently no PhD programs focusing on genetic or genomic counselling in Canada - genetic counsellors are generally master's level healthcare professionals. There are four Masters programs in Genetic Counselling available across Canada that have been accredited by the Accreditation Council for Genetic Counselling (see Table 1 below).

Table 1: Accredited Programs in Genetic Counselling in Canada						
Province	Program	University	Duration	Program Costs		Funding
				Dom.	Intl.	
BC	<u>Master in Genetic Counselling</u>	University of British Columbia	Two years	\$43,183.55	\$46,086.1	Two \$4000 scholarships (2021)
MB	<u>MSc Genetic Counselling</u>	University of Manitoba	Two years	\$37,839.76	\$51,138.48	N/A
ON	<u>Msc Genetic Counselling</u>	University of Toronto	Two years	\$15,960	\$57,472	<u>\$2,000-4,000 per year</u>
QC	<u>MSc in Genetic Counselling</u>	McGill	Two years	\$21,343. 5 (non-Quebec) \$9,782.76 (Quebec)	\$57,126.36	Not program intrinsic

PhD and joint degree programs are available in the USA (see Table 2 below).



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

2021-10-21

Table 2: Accredited PhD Programs in Genetic Counselling outside Canada

Location	Program	University	Duration	Program Costs		Funding
				Dom.	Intl.	
Pittsburgh, USA	<u>PhD in Genetic Counselling</u>	University of Pittsburgh	4 years	\$56,804	\$91,024	Graduate Student Researchers (GSR) have tuition fees covered
Minnesota	PhD/MS in Genetic Counselling Joint Degree Program	University of Minnesota	Five years	\$124,908.76	\$193,284	support to 10 students: · TAs pay 50% of resident tuition in Y1. · TAs are paid \$7,828 stipend. · In the last 2 semesters, TAs pay resident tuition.
Virginia	Dual Ph.D. in Human Genetics and M.S. in Genetic Counselling Degree	Virginia Commonwealth University	Five years	MSc: \$63,090 PhD: \$52,020	MSc: \$129,780 PhD: \$106,660	Tuition is covered for students throughout their training. Students will also receive the PhD stipend during PhD.

While costs are considerably high in comparison to Canadian tuition, the University of Pittsburgh and Virginia programs provide credible alternatives to the proposed PhD program at UBC. The competition offers students the possibility of full tuition coverage: this is an enticing opportunity that is likely to attract both Canadian and international students.



2021-10-21

Comparison with Proposed Program

In its current structure, the program costs for the PhD in Genetics and Genomic Counselling are projected to be \$13,398.48 for domestic candidates and \$21,262.62 for international students over a six-installment period. Continuing fees would be \$791.53 for domestic students and \$3043.77 for international candidates¹.

Being a first of its kind program in Canada, the PhD in Genetic and Genomic Counselling will be a noteworthy addition to a growing academic field. In comparison to the costs of completing equivalent programs from the US, the Faculty of Medicine at UBC have provided a comparatively cost-effective alternative. This along with talented and reputed faculty are likely to contribute to UBC's reputation and stature on the international stage and make BC an attractive destination for qualified genetic counsellors.

It therefore becomes equally important to uphold and build upon the reputation this earns for the University as the program proceeds by matching our competition.

Now more than ever, affordability is becoming a major factor in decisions regarding academics. Costs of living have risen with the pandemic, and as economic activity resumes more individuals are likely to prefer joining the workforce than return to school. The program fees and continuing fees are likely to increase annually, which means students who are qualified to work see lesser incentive to start doctoral studies.

Consequently, the Graduate Student Society recommends the inclusion of stronger incentives to overtake potential losses to competitors. These may be realised via the following routes:

- **Revise the stipend in accordance with rise in tuition fees:** A major concern area for prospective students would be increasing tuition fees with a static stipend. This is likely to push students to considering US alternatives rather than UBC. We could be addressed at the Dept. of Genetics and Faculty of Medicine. Or even be brought to the attention of the UBC Finance Committee.
- **Considering prospective students for internal funding opportunities such as the International Tuition Award:** While this may be addressed, it's unclear on whether inapplicability of UBC funding is owing to a UBC regulation. Would it be possible for this see the light at the Finance Committee? But...

¹ This means international students are likely to pay up to **\$32,000** in course fee if they take 4 years to complete the program – a conservative estimate.



2021-10-21

Assuming it is a decision by the Faculty of Medicine, the GSS believes that this issue could as well be brought to the Board or members of the Finance Committee.

- **Creating work opportunities:** At the GSS we are open to discuss possibilities of developing Work-Learn/Graduate Research positions for Genetic Counsellors with the Dept. of Genetics and Faculty of Medicine.
- **Tuition waivers:** Most universities provide for tuition waivers, especially for gifted candidates or impressive applicants – this is creating a point of competition with US schools as well. Seeing as there is no provision for this in the proposal, the GSS proposes that the Faculty of Medicine & Dept. of Genetics to consider such an avenue or strengthen the current senate recommendations on new PhD admissions.
- **Revising the continuation fee for international students:** Continuation fees that are equivalent to the ‘per semester fee’ adversely affect students from Lower- & Middle-Income countries... (Could additionally incentivise rushed research). This takes away from the goal of reputation building – we would want to continue attracting the best minds to UBC and allow them to deliver greatly.

4 OF 4

Below are the Faculty of Medicine responses to the two GSS submissions.

Dear Kimani (President GSS),

I would like to express my sincere thanks to the GSS for their thoughtful review of the tuition consultation document for the PhD proposal in Genetic and Genomic Counselling.

Please note that we will be removing references to the International Student Award (ITA) not being made available and that international students will be eligible for the ITAs.

Kind regards,

Alison

Alison M. Elliott, PhD, MS, CGC

Associate Professor

Dept of Medical Genetics, UBC

Project Lead: GenCOUNSEL

Dear Kimani,

Thank you for the thoughtful report. With respect to the GSS comments, the Department is committed to considering ways in which the program could be made more affordable. We have addressed specific issues below:

- **Revise the stipend in accordance with rise in tuition fees** – As indicated in the proposal, the stipend provided is determined by the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. We would encourage students to apply for internal and external funding awards (see below) and anticipate that they will be extremely competitive.
- **Considering prospective students for internal funding opportunities such as the International Tuition Award.** We have already confirmed the ITA will be available for eligible students. Given the caliber of prospective students, we anticipate students enrolled in this program will be competitive for internal awards such as UBC Four year fellowship, BC Children's Research Institute Awards, and external awards such as CIHR Doctoral Awards and Awards from the Canadian Association of Genetic Counsellors and National Society of Genetic Counselors.
- **Creating work opportunities** – The department would work with the GSS, researchers and clinicians, to determine opportunities that may be available to prospective students.
- **Tuition waivers** – The program is not able to provide tuition waivers, but as indicated above, prospective students will likely be competitive for funding awards. In addition, the program is investigating the potential for stipends once the program is more established.
- **Revising the continuation fee for international students** – This is beyond the scope of this program, but supervisors would help to facilitate different funding and work opportunities for students as indicated above.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Thank you

Alison

Alison M. Elliott, PhD, MS, CGC

Associate Professor

Dept of Medical Genetics, UBC

Project Lead: GenCOUNSEL