

## **Graduate Writing Forums (GWF) Meeting Minutes**

Date: August 13, 2014

Attendees: Estella Qi, Andy Leung, and Vincenzo Coia

Minute Taker: Vincenzo Coia

Purpose: Discuss changes to the structure of the Graduate Writing Forums based on the outcome of the inaugural forum (on writing research grants) held in summer 2014.

The attendees identified two major problems with the inaugural forum: few participants in the forum, and fewer participants willing to participate in the exchange of feedback. These 'symptoms' are likely due to two underlying problems:

1. Lack of spontaneity
  - The brainstorming session could not capture the students' issues as they arose.
2. Complicated process
  - Once a forum is created, there are too many steps involved (and thus too long a time) to get the students the help and feedback they need.

A solution is to build an online forum, like [stackoverflow.com](http://stackoverflow.com), where Statistics graduate students post a specific writing-related question that other students can answer. The process is spontaneous and simple, hence solving the two underlying problems. The online forum has the added benefit that participants also gain experience in clarifying their thoughts, whether by asking a question or providing an explanation through an answer. The forum may need monitoring by the leaders of the GWF.

The attendees discussed websites that could be used for the online forum. The website ideally should:

- be confidential to UBC Statistics graduate students;
- allow for posts to be categorized and tagged; and
- have the option to search posts by text recognition as well as by number of responses.

Some preliminary options that were thought of are UBC Connect, UBC Wiki, or Wordpress. It was agreed that, to start, a forum should be set up on UBC Wiki, since it is the simplest option. After a term or a year has passed, the effectiveness of the online forum concept will be re-evaluated: if the online forum is effective, then a better website can be considered more seriously at that point.

The next issue of discussion was to bring awareness of the online forum to the graduate students. This can be done initially through an email to the graduate students after the UBC Wiki is set up prior to the start of the school year, then

reiterated in person during the first student seminar of the upcoming school year. Annually, new graduate students can be made aware of the forum at the Department Orientation event in September.

**Action items**

*Vincenzo:* Set up an online forum using the UBC Wiki prior to September 2, 2014. Then, send an email to the Statistics graduate students promoting it.

*Andy:* Promote the online forum to new graduate students at the Statistics Department Orientation, as well as to existing graduate students at the first graduate student seminar.