

**GPDN**Graduate and Postdoctoral
Development Network**RPESP**Réseau pour le perfectionnement aux
études supérieures et postdoctorales

2024 GPDN-RPESP Annual Conference Schedule

*Empowering Graduate and Postdoctoral Success***Dates:** Monday, October 28 and Tuesday, October 29, 2024**Location:** Sheraton Hotel, Toronto, Ontario**Time:** 8:45 am - 5:00 pm ET**Conference Padlet:** <https://padlet.com/GPDN/2024> for sharing thoughts and suggestions as the conference proceeds

Day 1: October 28

Time (ET)	Session	Details
12:00 – 1:00 pm (ET)	Lunch	Registration & Lunch (in-person)
1:00 – 3:00 pm (ET)	Professional Development Discussions	Welcoming Remarks & Facilitated Discussions for Professional Development Practitioners Separate sessions will be held concurrently for online and in-person attendees to discuss emerging topics in graduate and postdoctoral development
3:00 – 5:00 pm (ET)	Networking	Facilitated Networking Separate sessions will be held concurrently for online and in-person attendees to meet GPDN members

Day 2: October 29

Time (EST)	Session	Details
8:45 – 9:10 am (ET)	Registration	Registration & Breakfast Coffee and light breakfast served (in person)
9:10 – 9:20 am (ET)	Day 2 Welcome	Welcome Short remarks from the Conference Committee
9:20 – 10:00 am (ET)	Lightning Talks	1. Preparing Graduate Students for Diverse Careers Speakers discussing the need to support graduate professional development for academic and non-academic careers: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plan A versus Plan B Careers in Graduate Professional Development David Lafferty (Carleton University)• Addressing the Gap in Academic Professionalization for Graduate Students Karim Abuawad (Carleton University)

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études supérieures et postdoctorales

10:00 – 10:10 am (ET)	Break	Time to chat and recharge
10:10 – 11:00 am (ET)	Lightning Talks	2. Providing Postdoctoral Development Support Speakers on how to engage and support postdoctoral researchers, as well as help them prepare for faculty roles: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Postdoc Engagement Liaisons: Upgrading Community, Experience, and Insight Ashley Ryan (University of Waterloo)● Incorporating Postdoctoral Supports Joanne Lieu and Jonathan Turner (University of Toronto)● From Postdoc to Research Faculty Crash Course: A unique inter-institutional professional development series for postdoctoral researchers preparing to be faculty Ketan Marballi (Toronto Metropolitan University) and Beth Munro (Sick Kids Hospital), speaking on behalf of a larger team
11:00 – 12:00 pm (ET)	Panel	3. Cohorts Across Canada A Panel Discussion on Cohort-based Career Programming for Graduate Students , moderated by Joanne Lieu (University of Toronto): <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Accelerate Your Academic Job Search Agata Rybalkiewicz (McGill University)● Arts & Science PhD Professional Development Cohorts Joel Rodgers (University of Toronto)● PhD Career Connect Maria Kyres (Concordia University)● The Sustainability Scholars Program Karen Taylor (University of British Columbia)
12:00 – 12:45 pm (ET)	Lunch	Lunch Buffet served (in person)
12:45 – 1:40 pm (ET)	AGM	GPDN Annual General Meeting

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études supérieures et postdoctorales

1:40 – 2:20 pm (ET)	Lightning Talks	4. Supporting Graduate Student Wayfinding Speakers on ways to build institutional programming and community for graduate students <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The GRADnavigate Pilot Program Monica Munaretto (University of Waterloo)• Interventional Approaches to New Graduate Student Programming Felicia Glatz (University of Calgary)• How It Started / How It's Going: Instructional Inclusivity and Accessibility Felicia Glatz (University of Calgary) and Carrie Hanson (McGill University)
2:20 – 3:10 pm (ET)	Lightning Talks	5. Required and Co-Curricular Programming Speakers on using mandatory and co-curricular programming to build research and professional development skills <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mandatory Workshops for Grad Students: Benefit or Burden? Minea Valle-Fajer and Camille Fitch-Kutscher (Polytechnique Montreal)• Re-orientation: An Initiative to Support Post-coursework and Post-comprehensive Exam Graduate Students Javier Ibarra-Isassi (Concordia University)• Reimagining Graduate Professional Development Conferences to Build Community Jessica K. Bailey (University of Toronto)
3:10 – 3:20 pm (ET)	Break	Time to chat and recharge
3:20 – 4:20 pm (ET)	Professional Development Discussions	GPDN Member Professional Development Member-led breakout discussions of key topics from the conference (see https://padlet.com/GPDN/2024)
4:20 – 4:30 pm (ET)	Day 2 Closing	Closing Short remarks from the Conference Committee, followed by opportunities for in-person attendees to connect over dinner after the CAGS reception.

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études supérieures et postdoctorales

Session Abstracts

Session 1: Preparing Graduate Students for Diverse Careers

Speakers discussing the need to support graduate professional development for academic and non-academic careers.

Plan A versus Plan B Careers in Graduate Professional Development, David Lafferty (Carleton University)

PhD programs are still designed to train scholars, but the university system is producing far more PhDs than there are professional teaching and research opportunities in academia. Consequently, one of the primary tasks of graduate professional development services is to help students envision and prepare for “plan B” career alternatives to the “plan A” goal of becoming a university professor. This has given rise to what I call the A/B problem: there seems to be no way to properly prepare students for both plan A and B career paths without 1) drawing upon far more time and resources than are typically currently available, 2) placing extra burdens upon students that may affect program completion times, or 3) altering the purpose and structure of PhD programs in ways that might only duplicate the A/B problem on a program level.

My short talk offers a brief survey of the A/B problem but offers no solutions, and indeed I believe that the A/B problem can't be solved within the current paradigm in higher education. I argue instead that as people working in graduate professional development, we need to recognize the tensions and contradictions that arise from the A/B problem, incorporate this recognition within our advice to PhD students, and work with faculty and university leadership to advocate for the social importance of a vibrant ecosystem of scholarship and offer concrete proposals for structural change.

Addressing the Gap in Academic Professionalization for Graduate Students, Karim Abuawad (Carleton University)

Graduate Professional Development programming has experienced significant growth in the past decade. This expansion in graduate-focused professional development resources has helped both institutions and graduate students reimagine new avenues for graduate studies outside academia. With this growth, however, came a potentially problematic byproduct: the overemphasis on career preparation for non-academic positions. While this approach has helped many graduate students find their way into meaningful and rewarding careers, now might be the time to consider placing more emphasis on developing academic professionalization resources as part of graduate professional development offerings. These resources would essentially serve as a way to deal with the “overcorrection” that resulted from the growth of non-academic professional development resources now available on Canadian campuses. This lightning talk will provide an overview of what this approach looks like within Carleton University's Grad PD program.

**GPDN**Graduate and Postdoctoral
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études supérieures et postdoctorales

Session 2. Providing Postdoctoral Development Support

Speakers addressing how to engage and support postdoctoral students, as well as help them prepare for faculty roles:

Postdoc Engagement Liaisons: Upgrading Community, Experience, and Insight, Ashley Ryan (University of Waterloo)

Postdoc Engagement Liaisons is a new initiative started by Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs (GSPA) at the University of Waterloo in 2024. Postdoc Engagement Liaisons are postdoctoral scholars from across Waterloo in different disciplines and backgrounds who come together and meet with GSPA staff to discuss and act on ways to improve the postdoc community and experience. This initiative started as a strategy to address a challenge we have been facing; low postdoc engagement. We also wanted to give our postdocs a platform to share their ideas and come up with new and improved ways to connect with each other and with other members of our community. Topics discussed in this initiative include the type of events postdocs most look forward to and/or desire (e.g., faculty specific orientation events), the most effective way to connect and share information with postdocs, how we can continually strengthen the postdoc community at Waterloo for years to come, and what resources postdocs are in need of (e.g., support in navigating the transition from postdoc life to the industry or academic job market). This conference lightning talk will focus on how this initiative came to be and the successes and challenges faced so far. Conference participants will gain insight on the current experience of postdocs and ideas for sparking similar initiatives at their own institutions. Let's work together to continue upgrading communities and all facets of experience for postdocs across our universities.

Incorporating Postdoctoral Supports, Joanne Lieu and Jonathan Turner (University of Toronto)

Postdoctoral scholars are essential to the University ecosystem as they advance research, , and teaching initiatives. Given the diversity of their roles as researchers, teachers, mentors, and more, postdoctoral scholars require professional development support separate from that offered to graduate students. George (2023) highlights how the ambiguity of the postdoctoral research identity can lead to feelings of isolation, invisibility, and exclusion. In this lightning talk, the presenters will showcase the strategic process involved in reigniting and building professional development supports for postdoctoral scholars, including communication strategies, community-building initiatives and future directions for expanding postdoctoral support within the Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering. After attending the session, attendees will: 1) Recognize how findings from the 2020 Canadian National Postdoctoral Survey Report: Ten Years of Longitudinal Data Analysis informed the initiative arch of postdoctoral scholar support; 2) Discover how to ensure collaboration when creating asynchronous and synchronous postdoctoral scholar supports; and 3) Learn the initiatives piloted within the Faculty of Applied Science & Engineering to support postdoctoral scholars' professional and personal development.

**GPDN**Graduate and Postdoctoral
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From Postdoc to Research Faculty Crash Course: A unique inter-institutional professional development series for postdoctoral researchers preparing to be faculty,

Ketan Marballi (Toronto Metropolitan University) and Beth Munro (Sick Kids Hospital)

Co-Authors (not presenting): Rosanne Aleong (Rotman Research Institute), Kristine Antony (SickKids Hospital), Lorien Iantomasi (Sinai Health), Sofiia Ivantsiv (Unity Health), Amanda Mohabeer (University of Toronto), Lena Quilty, (Institute for Mental Health Policy Research), and Amanda Veri (University Health Network)

Postdoctoral researchers at universities and hospitals often lack professional development support for aiding their career transitions. To address this need, we established a novel Toronto Academic Health Sciences Network (TAHSN)-wide collaborative program among five hospital-based Research Training Centres (University Health Network, Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids), Baycrest Academy for Research & Education, Sinai Health, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Unity Health) and two university programs (Faculty of Engineering and Architectural Science, Toronto Metropolitan University and Schmidt AI in Science Program, University of Toronto). Our collaborative program titled “From Postdoc to Research Faculty Crash Course” included five educational modules on academic CVs and cover letters, research statements, teaching dossiers and Equity Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) statements, interviewing and chalk talks, and negotiations. The series consisted of a mix of synchronous in-person and virtual, recorded sessions with over 150 attendees for some events. The program concluded with an in-person panel and networking event with scientists and faculty members from diverse backgrounds, career stages, and institutions. In addition, postdoctoral researchers preparing job applications were offered one-on-one reviews and support on their CVs and cover letters. Feedback survey data revealed that 87% of participants agreed that the program helped to prepare them to transition into a faculty research position and 95% agreed that the program met their expectations. This pilot program provided a substantial foundation for supporting postdoctoral researchers seeking academic roles. Participant feedback will inform the continued refinement and expansion of this multidisciplinary support at a critical point in their career trajectories.

**GPDN**Graduate and Postdoctoral
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études supérieures et postdoctorales

Session 3. Cohorts Across Canada: A Panel Discussion on Cohort-based Career Programming for Graduate Students

moderated by Joanne Lieu (University of Toronto)

Cohort-based programming can transform the graduate student's experience. Cohorts provide a supportive, collaborative learning environment beyond the classroom that can be leveraged in different ways for career development. Programs might focus on introducing students to skills needed to navigate academic and/or industry pathways; they might focus on exploring and building opportunities on expanding partnership involvement for career development. Cohort programs can offer tailored career development support, given specific discipline needs. But cohort-based programs can also foster opportunities for cross-disciplinary connections. In this panel discussion, experts from across the country will discuss their cohort programs' purposes and structures, the challenges they experienced in building the cohorts, and the advice they'd give practitioners when developing a cohort program. After the panel, attendees will be able to

- Determine a cohort structure for meeting specific priorities in graduate student career development.
- Anticipate important challenges encountered and opportunities created in delivering cohort-based career programs.
- Identify different models for measuring success with cohort-based career programs.

Panel Members & Programs:

Accelerate your Academic Job Search

Agata Rybalkiewicz, MEd, Graduate Career Advisor
McGill University

Arts & Science PhD Professional Development Cohorts

Joel Rodgers, PhD, Coordinator, Graduate Student Professional Development
University of Toronto

PhD Career Connect

Maria Kyres, MA, Graduate Career Development Coordinator
Concordia University

The Sustainability Scholars Program

Karen Taylor, MA, Senior Manager, Sustainability Scholars & Strategic Implementation
University of British Columbia

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Session 4. Supporting Graduate Student Wayfinding

Speakers on ways to build institutional programming and community for graduate students:

The GRADnavigate Pilot Program, Monica Munaretto (University of Waterloo)

In 2023-2024, Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs at the University of Waterloo developed a pilot program of workshops for graduate students called GRADnavigate. In previous years, similar programming was offered through one day or two day conferences and we observed dwindling participation. In response to these challenges with engagement, a new workshop series was developed which permitted students to self-select from a variety of topics presented in multiple formats with one or two sessions offered per month. The topics selected targeted known graduate student life challenges and areas for professional growth and the events were scheduled strategically to align with the milestones in students' progression through their programs. Topics were selected based on evidence from the literature, student feedback in previous sessions, and facilitator expertise.

Interventional Approaches to New Graduate Student Programming, Felicia Glatz (University of Calgary)

While some graduate students will progress through their studies without accessing the full plethora of supports, resources, and services that are available to them. Those that do, often only access them as the result of challenge or incident. For instance, graduate students may not be aware of Academic Integrity support until the moment of misconduct, equally, a student researcher may not fully understand the process of research ethics application until they learn that their research requires ethics at all. Institutionally, how can we close these gaps in knowledge and service? Further, how can we engage graduate students in, and acclimate them to university culture in a way that matters to them most?

For this session, I am sharing UCalgary's proactive approach to graduate student programming. The Faculty of Graduate Studies has begun offering newly enrolled graduate students a suite of programs dedicated to the topics of Academic Integrity, Research Ethics, and general Orientation. Each representing intentional and collective insight from respective student representatives and subject matter experts. As products of highly collaborative relationships across campus, featuring case studies and scenarios rooted in the student experience, we hope to empower graduate students from day one. My aim for this session is to elaborate our building and facilitation processes, while provoking discussion from others about how to best support graduate students at the beginning of their studies.

Update: How It Started / How It's Going: Instructional Inclusivity and Accessibility, Felicia Glatz (University of Calgary) and Carrie Hanson (McGill University)

We are a collection of tools, strategies, and ideas. We are an ongoing conversation, ebbing and flowing with the post-secondary landscape. We are a community of practitioners seeking answers, sharing experiences, and taking turns to lead the way. We are the Instructional Inclusivity and Accessibility community of practice. Launched in 2023, we are led by our membership in an exploration for ways to enrich learning environments for all. For our session we would like to provide members with an update on what we have accomplished, and where we plan to go in the future. This includes our overarching purpose, our facilitators, and upcoming opportunities. Hoping you will all come along with us.

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Session 5. Required and Co-Curricular Programming

Speakers on using mandatory and co-curricular programming to build research and professional development skills:

Mandatory Workshops for Grad Students: Benefit or Burden?

Minea Valle-Fajer and Camille Fitch-Kustcher (Polytechnique Montreal)

Polytechnique offers mandatory complementary one credit out of program workshops to their PhD students. These four workshops (in French and English, offered each semester) must be completed by the end of the doctoral student's fourth semester, matching the comprehensive examination deadline. Since 2019, two are offered to research master's students, for completion before the end of their second semester.

This communication presents the results of a post-workshop survey conducted in 2023-2024 among students who completed CAP7003 "Doctoral research strategies in engineering" or CAP7005 "Handling of scientific and technical information". We set to assess students' perception of relevance, achievement, and practical application of course objectives. We evaluated whether these were achieved in a sustainable and transferable way and whether students were still reaping the benefits some months after the end of the workshop.

Regarding CAP7003, most respondents agree that the workshop allowed them to achieve each of the set objectives. In large part, the workshop increased confidence in their ability to apply the skills taught. Many respondents feel the workshop content (learning goals and activities) contributed to accelerating their progress in their research projects.

Concerning CAP7005, a majority of respondents had put into practice the competencies taught. Did the students consider them well understood? How much were they using them today? Their answers will help us develop this course, but also other learning opportunities throughout student's academic path.

Overall, our survey confirms that workshop objectives were achieved, with a majority reporting improved abilities to effectively carry out their research projects.

Re-orientation: An Initiative to Support Post-coursework and Post-comprehensive Exam Graduate Students, **Javier Ibarra-Isassi (Concordia University)**

As graduate students progress beyond coursework and comprehensive exams, their focus shifts towards meeting research requirements and preparing for their careers. A multifaceted support approach is essential at this stage to enhance their academic and professional development, providing clarity and guidance for their future paths.

Re-orientation is a one-day event aiming to equip students with the knowledge and skills for the next steps in their academic journey. Preliminary interviews with focus groups revealed that grad students would like to receive support in thesis preparation and networking. Thus, the learning outcomes of this initiative are (1) Develop comprehensive plans for thesis preparation and execution, including research planning, and publishing; and (2) Employ effective network techniques to create meaningful connections with collaborators and professionals.

These learning outcomes can be achieved through workshops sessions. Two sessions aiming to provide tools for planning and executing thesis-related activities, academic writing, project management and publishing. A special emphasis can be placed on thesis writing and formatting requirements and the creation of a timeline for submission. Then, two workshops would aim to

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études supérieures et postdoctorales

develop networking skills and establishing meaningful connections with collaborators at conferences or engage with other professionals, enhancing the career prospects and professional growth of the participants.

By focusing on these areas, graduate students would be empowered to continue through the final stages of their programs, potentially reducing drop-out numbers, and supporting students into a smooth transition out of their degrees.

Reimagining Graduate Professional Development Conferences to Build Community, Jessica K. Bailey (University of Toronto)

The Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre (RGASC) at the University of Toronto's Mississauga Campus has hosted bi-annual graduate professional development conferences since 2017. The conference format (i.e., sessions from faculty and staff across U of T, meal breaks, and a concluding networking event) has been an effective type of programming as the event reached graduate students of various disciplines and milestones. In its inception, the Graduate Professional Development Conference (GPDC) was an in-person event which shifted online during the COVID-19 pandemic. As more in-person programming returned to campus, less engagement in online programming was noted, including attendance at GPDC. This session focuses on showcasing the redesigned format of the RGASC's GPDC. The intent of the newly formatted GPDC was to keep the event accessible to graduate students, allow attendees to hear about other graduate students' lived experiences, and provide graduate student speakers a paid professional development opportunity to speak with their peers to build community. This session will outline the conference planning process including conference planning logistics, the call for proposals for graduate students, and the successes and challenges experienced.