2018-2019 Graduate Council
Minutes of the Meeting: February 13, 2019

Graduate Council met on Wednesday, February 13, 2019 at 3:30 p.m. in 102 Kern Graduate Building. Dr. Regina Vasilatos-Younken, Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Dean of the Graduate School, chaired the meeting. The minutes of the January 16, 2019 meeting were approved.

Communications to Graduate Council
Dr. Vasilatos-Younken introduced Dr. Suzanne Adair and Dr. Ann Taylor, Co-Chairs of the Special Joint Committee to Re-Examine the Consensual Relationships Section of AD85.

Dr. Adair and Dr. Taylor explained that the committee’s goal is to provide guidelines for consensual relationships only where an evaluative or supervisory capacity is involved. The committee has made the following recommendations:

- Remove this policy language from AD 85 and create a distinct policy.
- Prohibit, not just discourage, these relationships and require immediate disclosure if such a relationship develops.
- Specific steps to develop a mitigation plan where these relationships exist.

In response to questions from Council, Dr. Adair and Dr. Taylor clarified that there is no requirement for a third party to report a possible relationship, that the start of a relationship is deliberately not defined, and that no specific time period for disclosure is mandated. Dr. Adair and Dr. Taylor are presenting this draft to many groups across the University to get feedback on it before moving forward. Representatives of the Graduate and Professional Student Association expressed interest in a presentation on this topic to GPSA as a whole.

Announcements/Remarks by the Chair – Regina Vasilatos-Younken, Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Dean of the Graduate School
None.

Reports of Standing Committees of Graduate Council

Committee on Committees and Procedures
Dr. Vasilatos-Younken recognized Dr. Siela Maximova, Chair of the Committee on Committees and Procedures.

Dr. Maximova reported the committee met on Thu. Jan. 17 to discuss and propose revisions to the Graduate Council Articles of Authority, Bylaws, and Standing Rules for the process of electing a faculty chair of Graduate Council and the qualifications of the chair. The committee will meet again on Wed. Feb. 20 to review the proposed drafts and resolve final questions, with the goal of presenting these drafts to Graduate Council at its March meeting.

Committee on Academic Standards
Dr. Vasilatos-Younken recognized Dr. Doug Stairs, Chair of the Committee on Academic Standards.

After a brief discussion, Dr. Stairs moved to approve revisions to GCAC-603 Doctoral Committee Responsibilities – Research Doctorate. The motion was adopted. Dr. Stairs reported the committee met
that morning and voted on proposed revisions to GCAC-604 Qualifying Examination – Research Doctorate that will be introduced to Graduate Council at its March meeting.

Committee on Programs and Courses
Dr. Vasilatos-Younken recognized Dr. Andy Cole, Chair of the Committee on Programs and Courses.

Dr. Cole presented the February 6, 2019 Graduate Council Curriculum Report, which was included in the materials for this meeting and is available to the public on the Graduate School's website. The committee will meet on Thu. Feb. 14 to review eleven proposals and continue discussion on the guidelines for a capstone course.

Committee on Fellowships and Awards
Dr. Vasilatos-Younken recognized Dr. David Atwill, Chair of the Committee on Fellowships and Awards.

Dr. Atwill reported that the subcommittees are currently voting on nominations, and the awardees should be announced within a month.

Committee on Graduate Research
Dr. Vasilatos-Younken recognized Dr. Siela Maximova, Chair of the Committee on Graduate Research.

Dr. Maximova reported that the committee met two weeks ago and continued discussion of the report on barriers to sustainability and growth of Intercollege Graduate Degree Programs (IGDPs). The report is scheduled to be sent to the University Faculty Senate in March but may be postponed until April to include additional information. The committee also discussed moving forward with a report on graduate student climate issues and the Graduate Student Exit Survey results. The committee requested revisions to the report that will include other University initiatives that are addressing this issue.

Committee on Graduate Student and Faculty Issues
Dr. Vasilatos-Younken recognized Dr. Amy Allen, Chair of the Committee on Graduate Student and Faculty Issues.

Dr. Allen reported the committee met earlier that day with Brian Patchcoski, Director of the LGBTQA Student Resource Center, who presented about resources on campus for graduate students. The Center plans to request additional funding for services and support for graduate students. Mr. Patchcoski also discussed workshops and programming that the Center can provide to departments and units on a variety of topics.

At its next meeting, the committee will continue discussion on the draft survey for graduate students who stop out or don’t complete their degrees.

Subcommittee on Graduate Exhibition
Dr. Vasilatos-Younken recognized Dr. Elizabeth Hughes, Chair of the Graduate School’s Graduate Exhibition Committee.

Dr. Hughes reported that registration for the 2019 Graduate Exhibition is now open on the Graduate School website (http://gradschool.psu.edu/exhibition/), with a closing deadline of February 22. Dr. Hughes asked that members encourage their students to participate and to consider participating
themselves as judges. Registration for judges is open and will close on March 8. The Graduate Exhibition will be held Fri. March 22 through Sun. March 24. The performance option will be held on Fri. March 22 in the Recital Hall. On Sun. March 24, students will present their research through posters, video, visual arts, and the new design option.

Special Reports

Graduate and Professional Student Association

Dr. Vasilatos-Younken recognized Claire Kelling of the Graduate and Professional Student Association (GPSA).

Ms. Kelling reported that GPSA voted to co-sponsor two conferences: the Graduate Women in Science Voices conference in February and the College of Engineering Research Symposium in April. GPSA also voted to fund the Graduate Writing Boot Camp event. At its next meeting, GPSA will revisit the question of proportional representation.

Unfinished Business

None.

New Business

None.

Comments and Recommendations for the Good of the Graduate Community

Dr. Vasilatos-Younken mentioned the Congressional budget impasse and expressed hope that there would not be another government shutdown. The previous shutdown had a huge impact on the interests of graduate students and other individuals who are supported on federal funds from affected agencies, such as grant-supported faculty, research staff, and fellows. Dr. Vasilatos-Younken urged Council members to contact their Congressional representatives and the Office of Government and Community Relations, particularly if they had personal stories to share about the effect of the shutdown.

Next meeting:

Wednesday, March 13, 2019 at 3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m., 102 Kern Graduate Building
DOCTORAL COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES – RESEARCH DOCTORATE

Contents:
- Purpose
- Academic Goal
- Scope
- Background
- Definitions
- Policy Statement
- Process
- Forms
- Further Information
- Cross References/Other Policies

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to identify the duties and responsibilities of the Doctoral Committee – Research Doctorate (hereafter, Ph.D. Committee) in guiding the student in scholarly work and professional development.

ACADEMIC GOAL:

The academic goal of this policy is to ensure that research doctoral students receive timely and comprehensive guidance from members of the Graduate Faculty that facilitates progress toward their degree, including meeting the Graduate Council’s Scholarly and Professional Goals for All Graduate Degree Students.

SCOPE:

This policy applies to all students enrolled in programs of study leading to the Ph.D.

BACKGROUND:

The broad purpose of the Ph.D. Committee is to ensure that each Ph.D. student receives the attention, guidance, and mentoring necessary to successfully earn their degree and meet the Graduate Council’s Scholarly and Professional Goals for Penn State graduates from a representative cross section of the Graduate Faculty. This policy describes the particular responsibilities of the Ph.D. Committee.

Moreover, continuing communication on a regular basis among the student, the committee chair, the dissertation adviser, and the other members of the committee is strongly recommended, in
order to preclude misunderstandings and to develop a collegial relationship among the student and all members of the committee.

DEFINITIONS:

POLICY STATEMENT:

1. Primary Responsibility: A doctoral program consists of a combination of courses, seminars, individual study, and research/scholarship that meets or exceeds the minimum requirements of Graduate Council. The primary responsibility of the Ph.D. Committee is to guide the broad scholarly development of the Ph.D. student, including direct responsibility for guidance and assessment of the student’s dissertation research and academic progress toward the Ph.D. degree. Ph.D. Committee members are appointed based on their skills and expertise with these goals in mind. Specific responsibilities include (but are not limited to):
   a. The Ph.D. Committee shall approve the educational program for each individual student beyond the program requirements.
      i. The Ph.D. Committee can require additional education, including course work, depending on the student’s background and research plans.
   b. The Ph.D. Committee shall approve a written assessment of the student’s progress on an annual basis. This assessment will:
      i. Include a review of any prior annual assessments.
      ii. Address the quality of the student’s research and progress toward their degree, including:
          1. Recommendations, as appropriate, to improve the student’s research;
          2. Any concerns identified and recommend actions to address the concerns.
      iii. Assess the student’s professional development and provide any recommendations as appropriate and that reflect, to the extent possible, the student’s career goals;
      iv. Accurately reflect the assessment by all members of the committee, including any minority opinions.
   c. The Ph.D. Committee shall administer the student’s Comprehensive Examination and assess the student’s performance on the examination.
   d. The Ph.D. Committee shall assess the student’s dissertation and recommend (or not) its approval to the Graduate School.
   e. The Ph.D. Committee shall conduct the student’s Final Oral Examination and assess the student’s performance on the examination.

2. Annual Assessments: The goal of the annual assessment is to evaluate student progress toward the degree and in meeting the Graduate Council’s Scholarly and Professional Goals for All Graduate Degree Students.
   a. The Ph.D. Committee will assess the student within one semester after its formation (excluding Summer Semester) including a review of the student’s dissertation research and the student’s understanding of the dissertation research goals, objectives, and methods. This is separate from evaluation of the student’s performance on the
Comprehensive Exam unless additional time and focus are added, as needed, to allow a holistic review of the student’s progress.

i. If the student’s program has received approval through the Graduate Council’s curricular review process to establish the Ph.D. Committee later than specified in GCAC-602, then the program head or designated academic adviser assumes Ph.D. Committee responsibilities as outlined in this policy. The first assessment will take place approximately one year after the Qualifying Examination is passed; the program head or designated academic adviser will provide an assessment of the student at least once annually after that until the student’s Ph.D. Committee is formed.

b. For subsequent assessments of the student, the Ph.D. Committee shall:
   i. Assess the quality and progress of the student’s research;
   ii. Assess the student’s professional development;
   iii. Decide whether any interim meetings should take place and, if so, when.

3. The Ph.D. Committee shall meet as necessary to advise the student and the student’s dissertation adviser.
   a. It is strongly recommended and a best practice for the entire Ph.D. Committee to meet together with the student to conduct the annual assessment. If there is no meeting, it is strongly recommended that the student meet individually with each member, at least annually.
   b. The student, the student’s Dissertation Adviser, the Ph.D. Committee Chair, or any two members of the Ph.D. Committee may request a meeting of the Ph.D. committee.

PROCESS:

1. Committee Assessment Reports: The Ph.D. Committee will review and approve the annual assessment that should include the opinions of all members and need not be unanimous.
   a. The assessment shall include:
      i. The Ph.D. Committee’s assessment of the student’s research and professional development progress, along with any advice the Ph.D. Committee may have for the student; such advice may include recommendations for supplemental study, an improvement plan (if necessary), and/or any other advice that would support the student’s progress toward their degree.
      ii. Any comments by the student with respect to the report.
      iii. The Ph.D. Committee’s decision on whether any meetings of the full Committee are to be scheduled (remote participation is acceptable).
   b. The student must acknowledge receipt and understanding of the annual assessment.
   c. The Ph.D. Committee Chair shall submit the completed annual assessment, with all approvals, to the major (and as appropriate, dual-title and/or minor) Graduate Program Head.
FORMS:

Annual Assessment of Research Doctoral Student

FURTHER INFORMATION:

CROSS REFERENCES / OTHER POLICIES:

GCAC-601 Residency Requirement – Research Doctorate
GCAC-602 Doctoral Dissertation Committee Formation, Composition, and Review – Research Doctorate
GCAC-603 Doctoral Committee Responsibilities – Research Doctorate
GCAC-604 Qualifying Examination – Research Doctorate
GCAC-605 English Competence – Research Doctorate
GCAC-606 Comprehensive Examination – Research Doctorate
GCAC-607 Dissertation – Research Doctorate
GCAC-608 Final Oral Examination – Research Doctorate

REVISION HISTORY

Approved by Graduate Council, February 13, 2019. Effective date: Fall 2019 (08/12/2019)