2018-2019 Graduate Council
Minutes of the Meeting: January 16, 2019

Graduate Council met on Wednesday, January 16, 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 December 12, 2018 meeting were approved.

Communications to Graduate Council
None.

Announcements/Remarks by the Chair – Regina Vasilatos-Younken, Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Dean of the Graduate School

Dr. Vasilatos-Younken reported that a question had been raised regarding stipend equity for graduate assistants based upon gender, race, and nationality. With the expert assistance of statisticians from the Eberly College of Science, including Dr. David Hunter, Dr. Aleksandra Slavkovic, and Dr. Kirsten Eilertson, a statistical analysis of data on all ½-time graduate assistant (GA) appointments for Fall 2018 was conducted. The review focused on the 3,849 half-time assistantship appointments that made up approximately 97% of all GA appointments. The remaining 3% were a relatively small number of quarter-time appointments (and a handful of ¾-time) that do not allow for a direct comparison. Using a Bonferroni correction for the large number of (over 300) comparisons made, the analysis showed no statistically significant evidence of a disparity due to gender, race, or nationality. Outcomes have been shared with respective units to assure any disparities not reconciled otherwise, if any, are addressed. The summary of the analysis will be distributed to Council as soon as it is available.

Dr. Vasilatos-Younken recognized Dr. Sarah Ades who announced that there will be informational presentations at upcoming Graduate Council meetings on two major topics that affect graduate education. First, the section on consensual relationships in University administrative policy AD85 Sexual and/or Gender-Based Harassment and Misconduct (Including Sexual Harassment, Sexual Assault, Dating Violence, Domestic Violence, Stalking, and Related Inappropriate Conduct) is in the process of being revised. The co-chairs of the Special Joint Committee to Re-examine the Consensual Relationships Section of AD85 will attend the February Graduate Council meeting to explain the proposed revisions and receive feedback from Council members. Second, the Penn State Academic Integrity Task Force was convened to better standardize academic integrity procedures across the University. The task force has proposed establishing a central academic integrity unit. As part of this, the graduate education community will have the opportunity to develop guidelines on academic integrity that are specific to graduate students, since the focus so far has been on undergraduate education. The co-chairs of the task force, Yvonne Gaudelius and Karen Feldbaum, will discuss the task force’s recommendations at a future meeting of Council.

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 that the University Faculty Senate voted to revise its Bylaws to specify that the chair of all faculty governance bodies to which the Senate has delegated authority must be elected from the unit’s non-administrative faculty. Since this change applies to Graduate Council, changes to Council’s
Articles of Authority, Bylaws, and Standing Rules will be necessary. The committee will meet on Jan. 17 to discuss and propose revisions to Graduate Council Bylaws and Standing Rules for the qualifications of the chair and the process for electing a faculty chair of Graduate Council.

**Committee on Academic Standards**

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

Dr. Stairs presented a draft of revisions to policy GCAC-603 Doctoral Dissertation Committee Responsibilities – Research Doctorate. The committee met earlier that day and recommended some amendments to the proposed revisions due to feedback received from Council members and the Advisory Committee for Graduate Education (ACGE). While the committee feels strongly that annual synchronous meetings of the Ph.D. committee are in the best interests of the student, and continue to recommend that as a best practice, this draft removes the requirement for an annual meeting of the Ph.D. committee and substitutes a requirement for an annual written assessment of each Ph.D. student’s progress. The annual written assessment must include a review of any prior assessments, and must assess the quality of the student’s research, progress toward the degree, and professional development. The assessment must be approved by all members of the Ph.D. committee to ensure that it accurately reflects the opinions of all committee members, including any minority opinions. The student will have the opportunity to add official comments and will be required to acknowledge their receipt and understanding of the assessment.

Additional editorial revisions to the policy were suggested by Council members. Council members also expressed a desire to discuss the new proposed revisions with their constituencies prior to a vote. The Committee on Academic Standards will review the revised draft via email, and it will be distributed to Council members in advance of an anticipated vote at the February Council 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 January 9, 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.

Dr. Cole presented revisions to policy GCAC-213 Residency and Related Policies for Off-Campus Degree Programs with a motion to approve the revisions. Under the current policy, new off-campus and online programs must submit a report to the Graduate Council Committee on Programs and Courses during the third year after inception of the program. The proposed revisions eliminate the required 3-year report to the Committee on Programs and Courses, and instead will require that the requested information be submitted and reviewed as part of the Graduate School’s regular program review cycle. The motion passed.

Dr. Cole presented revisions to policy GCAC-501 Credit Load with a motion to approve the revisions. The current policy sets the maximum credit load for all graduate students at 15 credits per semester. A student requesting to exceed the maximum credit load must obtain an exception through petition to Graduate Enrollment Services. The maximum credit load was put in place when most graduate programs were research degree programs (Ph.D., M.A., and M.S.) that require students to spend a significant amount of time outside of classwork on research activities. However, Penn State now offers a significant number of professional degree programs that do not have the same expectation of research outside of the classroom. The proposed revisions would maintain the maximum credit load of 15 credits per semester for students in a research degree program (Ph.D., M.A., M.S.), but would raise the maximum
credit load to 21 credits per semester for students in a professional degree program. The proposed revisions also clarify that a college or school may set a lower credit limit for their unit. This policy does not affect the maximum credit limits for students on assistantships, which are set by a separate administrative policy. The motion passed.

**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 committee completed the review of the University Graduate Fellowships reports from all the colleges and drafted a memo that will be sent to the Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Dean of the Graduate School within the next few weeks.

**Committee on Graduate Research**

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

Dr. Maximova reported that the committee has not met since the last Council meeting. However, it has finalized the report on barriers to sustainability and growth of Intercollege Graduate Degree Programs (IGDPs). The report will be sent to the University Faculty Senate and includes a recommendation that the Provost establish a University-level task force to identify long-term solutions to address the two major issues identified in the report: 1) establishing a programmatic funding model for these programs commensurate with their value to the University and 2) addressing the perceived second-class status of these important educational programs. The report will be presented to the Senate plenary meeting on March 12. The next meeting of the committee will be held on January 29.

**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 that the committee met earlier that day and held discussions with Cheryl Bonner, Director of Alumni Career Services, and Lesley Jackson, Student Outreach Coordinator.

The discussion with Ms. Bonner focused on LionLink, an online networking resource that connects Penn State alumni and current students. Ms. Bonner spoke about current functionalities in LionLink that can benefit graduate students and also discussed ways the current configuration could be changed or expanded to improve.

The discussion with Ms. Jackson focused on career and professional development resources for graduate students. Penn State Career Services serves graduate students as well as undergraduate students. Ms. Jackson spoke about the types of services that may benefit graduate students, such as resume review on a walk-in basis or longer appointments with career counselors. The committee suggested some additional ideas to better serve graduate students. There are two upcoming Career Services events that are specifically targeted to graduate students. A workshop on Career Fair Tips for Success: Focus for Graduate Students will be held on Wednesday, January 30. A workshop on translating Ph.D. training to non-academic careers, offered in conjunction with the College of the Liberal Arts, is also upcoming.

The committee began drafting questions for a survey of students who leave Penn State without completing their graduate degree. A draft has been circulated to the committee and will be discussed and refined at the next meeting.
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 will open at the beginning of February. The exhibition will be held March 22-24. The evening of Friday, March 22 will be the performance option held in the Recital Hall. On Sunday, March 24, students will present their research through posters, video submissions, and a new design option. The design option will have a poster component, but the main focus will be a design of some sort. An information session will be held February 6 from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. in Foster Auditorium, Paterno Library. This session will focus on the mechanics of creating a research poster and design, including organization, proper formatting, and tips for presentation. The session will also be livestreamed and recorded for students unable to attend in person.

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 the GPSA has not met since the last Council meeting. She noted that GPSA elections are coming up in March and asked Council members to encourage any interested students to consider running.

Unfinished Business

None.

New Business

None.

Comments and Recommendations for the Good of the Graduate Community

A Council member raised concerns over the ongoing shutdown of the federal government and its ramifications on grants and research funding. Dr. Vasilatos-Younken notified Council members that the University will soon release a statement which will include resources for students affected by the shutdown. The University is focusing on the interests of students and other individuals who are supported on federal funds from affected agencies, such as grant-supported faculty, research staff, and graduate students.

Next meeting:

Wednesday, February 13, 2019 at 3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m., 102 Kern Graduate Building
Residency and Related Policies for Off-Campus Degree Programs

Programs and Curriculum Policy GCAC-213

Purpose: to define residency and other requirements for graduate degrees classified as “off-campus degree programs.”

Academic Goal: to ensure the academic standards of traditional programs are maintained as graduate degree programs are offered via distance education and other nontraditional means.

Scope: all graduate programs.

Background

One of the traditional goals of universities has been to make graduate education accessible to the widest possible range of suitably prepared and motivated students, while maintaining the academic quality that gives advanced degrees their value. With the rapid changes in available instructional technologies, a considerable array of new and innovative approaches to graduate education has become feasible.

“Residency” requirements previously have been met by a period of enrollment or the completion of a minimum number of credits that are administratively associated with a specific Penn State campus and that are fulfilled in residence. As a result, it is appropriate to reconsider the meaning of “residency” and its applicability to graduate degree programs.

In addition, there are important implications with respect to the offering of graduate degree programs via distance education and other nontraditional means. This policy also addresses those issues.

Overall, the intent of Graduate Council is to encourage creative ways of addressing student and community needs, while ensuring that such graduate degree programs maintain academic standards parallel to those of more traditional programs.

Definitions

Extended Graduate Degree Programs: Programs that are extended from the University Park campus or other approved graduate center (Behrend College, Great Valley School of Graduate Professional Studies, Capital College, College of Medicine) to another University location.

Off-Campus Courses: Refers to graduate courses that are offered remotely from the site responsible for the class via any suitable technologies.
Off-Campus Degree Programs: Refers to graduate degree programs in which more than half of the course credits required for completion of the degree consists of off-campus courses, as defined above. Off-campus degree programs are offered at a non-University location (e.g., World Campus, corporate facility, school district, etc.), and include both programs delivered in a traditional face-to-face format and those delivered at a distance.

Policy Statement

1. The essential elements of residency, particularly with respect to research degree programs, are:
   a. interaction between faculty members and students above and beyond direct instruction (e.g., “journal clubs,” “coffee hour” discussion groups, hallway conversations, etc.)
   b. interaction between peers (i.e., among students in a given program)
   c. access to information and instructional resources (such as libraries, laboratories, and research facilities)
   d. exposure to and socialization in the field of study, including but not limited to seminar series, workshops, research exhibitions, discussions with professional peers, informal departmental activities, and other shared experiences
   e. ready access to suitable academic advising and support services
   f. contribution of graduate students to the degree program, the college, and the University, particularly with respect to the research and scholarship of the institution as a research-intensive university
   g. identification with Penn State

2. To fulfill the residency requirements for a graduate degree, it is necessary that students be physically present on campus for at least part of their graduate studies. Therefore, the existing residency requirements for the research degrees offered by the University (Ph.D., M.A., and M.S.), as described in GCAC-601 Residency Requirement - Research Doctorate, and GCAC-631 Degree Requirements - Research Master's are appropriate and effective in meeting these objectives.

3. For professional master’s degree programs, it may not always be possible, desirable, or necessary to fulfill residency in the traditional manner. Availability of professional mentors and accessibility to unique facilities at students' work sites or other locales may, in some instances, confer special advantages in well-designed off-campus master’s degree programs. Nonetheless, the components of residency described above are important factors in the graduate experience. Consequently:
   a. Professional master’s degree programs that are not “off-campus degree programs” as defined above (i.e., those in which less than half of the course credits consist of off-campus courses) implicitly have a substantial involvement of the students with the campus responsible for the program, thus fulfilling the majority of the functions of residency. No further requirements are necessary.
   b. Professional master’s degree programs that fall under the definition of “off-campus degree programs” must incorporate as many of the essential elements of residency as possible, including faculty-student and student-student interaction, access to instructional and other resources, exposure to and socialization in the field of study, and suitable academic advising. When the master’s degree program
is established, these components must be included. Their successful incorporation into the degree program must be demonstrated and documented as part of the Graduate School’s program review.

c. Postbaccalaureate and graduate credit certificate programs need not require satisfaction of any residency requirements, but incorporation of elements that provide experiences typically provided by residency also may be appropriate for off-campus postbaccalaureate and graduate credit certificate programs.

Related Policies for Off-Campus Courses and Graduate Degree Programs:

4. All 500- and 800-level courses, whether on- or off-campus and regardless of the delivery mode, must be delivered by members of the Graduate Faculty or individuals who have been preapproved to teach specific 500- and/or 800-level courses by the Dean of the Graduate School.

5. New or revised off-campus degree programs delivered at a distance must be offered through existing departments, colleges, and/or intercollege programs at the University, and those units are to retain academic control over program definition and content.

6. While all degree programs must be available to and advertised to all applicants, off-campus degree programs or courses delivered at a distance may be offered at specific company or other organizational sites, and instruction (e.g., case studies, problems, or class projects) may be tailored to particular groups of students. Off-campus delivery sites may restrict access at proprietary facilities to their employees or other approved participants. However, off-campus degree programs will not be created to serve a specific organization or client exclusively, and a “public” offering of every degree program must be made available. Off-campus postbaccalaureate or graduate credit certificate programs also must follow these policies where possible.

7. All students enrolled in off-campus degree programs are to be advised throughout their studies, beginning with or prior to initial enrollment, by Graduate Faculty members who serve on the faculty of the relevant degree program.

8. Admissions criteria for off-campus degree programs should be the same as those for traditional degree programs, and ideally should be handled by the same individuals or committees making the admissions decisions for the corresponding on-campus degree programs. Admission is not to be offered on a blanket basis (e.g., to all students who have completed a particular training or certificate program, or to all employees identified by a given company).

9. Off-campus degree programs must have a specific program faculty director to act as a focal point for the program and to oversee its development and delivery. This individual must be a member of the Graduate Faculty in the department offering the program, and may be the program chair, department head, graduate program officer or coordinator, or any other suitable faculty member.

10. Off-campus degree programs must meet the normal accreditation standards that are applicable to corresponding on-campus degree programs, where such accreditation related to the field exists.

11. Credits completed in undergraduate, postbaccalaureate, or graduate credit certificate programs may not be used to satisfy residency requirements of a subsequent graduate
degree, but if eligible by Graduate Council standards, may be counted towards degree requirements at the discretion of the graduate program.

12. Consideration should be given to offering off-campus degree programs on a fixed-cycle basis or cohort model, with recognition of the limitations vs. benefits of this model.

Process

1. Off-campus programs must receive approval from the Graduate Council Committee on Programs and Courses. To determine whether a program change proposal is necessary, consider the following: delivery of any graduate (500- and 800-level) course to students at an off-campus location, either in face-to-face instruction or through distance delivery technologies, requires academic approval as noted below.
   - Up to three existing graduate courses may be offered to students at an off-campus location with approval from the chair of the Graduate Council Committee on Programs and Courses and the Dean of the Graduate School through an expedited process; see guidelines and request form for the Expedited Review Process for Limited Off-Site Course Offerings.
   - Approval to offer four existing graduate courses up to half of the course credits required for completion of the degree to students at an off-campus location requires submission of a program change proposal by the graduate program to offer a blended program.
   - Approval to offer more than half of the course credits required for completion of the degree to students at an off-campus location requires submission of a program change proposal by the graduate program to offer the degree program off-site.

2. Expedited Review Process for Limited Off-Campus Course Offerings

   There are situations in which Penn State’s graduate degree-granting colleges or campuses (i.e., University Park, Penn State Great Valley, Penn State Harrisburg, Penn State Erie, Penn State College of Medicine) must move quickly to schedule courses off-site (i.e., either a Penn State location that is not a graduate center approved to offer a graduate degree, or a non-Penn State location). These situations may involve an invitation by a corporation to offer courses to employees at corporate headquarters or an unscheduled opportunity to offer courses at an undergraduate campus that does not offer a graduate degree.

   The following process is designed to enable graduate degree-granting programs to offer up to three existing graduate courses at a specific off-site location for specific semesters, while bypassing the full procedure of review by the Graduate Council Committee on Programs and Courses. **This process is not a substitute for proposals involving more than three courses, new courses, or degree program delivery.**

   **Conditions**

   a. No more than a total of three existing courses per graduate degree program may be submitted for approval by this expedited process. Requests for more than three
existing courses must be submitted to the Graduate Council Committee on Programs and Courses.
b. The courses to be delivered off campus must be previously approved, existing courses.
c. The faculty members teaching the specified courses are members of the graduate faculty or have been preapproved to teach the courses by the Dean of the Graduate School.
d. If courses at a specific location are successful and the campus/college decides to seek approval for additional offerings, existing procedures for proposing off-site graduate degree programs must be followed.
e. Whether the courses offered would be accepted as graduate-level courses applicable toward a Penn State graduate degree would depend upon the criteria of the graduate program as defined by the graduate degree program and approved by Graduate Council.
f. Registrants in these courses must have been admitted to the Graduate School as nondegree graduate students or as degree-seeking graduate students.

Procedure

**Expedited Review Process for Limited Off-Campus Course Offerings - Procedure**

**Fulfilling the Essential Elements of Residency in Off-Campus Graduate Degree Programs**

Forms

**Expedited Review Process for Limited Off-Campus Course Offerings - Form (PDF)**

Revision History

Approved by Graduate Council, April 1997.
Revised by Graduate Council, September 2013.
Approved by Graduate Council, January 16, 2019. Effective date: Fall 2019 (8/12/2019)
Credit Load

Registration Policy GCAC-501

**Purpose:** to define the minimum and maximum credit load per semester for full-time academic work in a graduate program.

**Academic Goal:** to inform students and advisers of appropriate course loads within the context of “normal progress” towards a degree.

**Scope:** all graduate students.

**Background**

Full-time participation in graduate study can involve a wide range of activities not limited to classroom activities in formal courses. The nature of these activities varies because of the diversity of programs throughout the University. Thus, full time participation in graduate study is associated with a range of credit loads.

**Definitions**

**Maximum Credit Load:** the maximum number of credits a student can register for each semester without being required to request an exception.

**Policy Statement**

1. The graduate student is responsible for ascertaining, through the adviser and/or program office, the range of total activity of his or her individual program that constitutes normal progress toward the degree.
2. A graduate student who is registered for at least 9 credits in a semester is considered to be engaged in full-time academic work for that semester.
3. The maximum credit load per semester for a student in a research degree program (Ph.D., M.A., M.S.) is 15 credits.
4. The maximum credit load per semester for a student in a professional degree program is 21 credits. A college/school may set a college-wide lower semester credit limit, if desired.
5. No student is permitted to count audited credits toward the minimum credit load for full-time or part-time status.
6. Undergraduate courses taken to meet foreign language or English requirements do count in the total credit load.
Process

If a graduate student wishes to register for more than the maximum credit load in a semester, an exception must be granted through petition (with adviser’s approval) to the Office of Graduate Enrollment Services.

Revision History

Last known revision, March 2017
Adapted from Graduate Bulletin, June 2018
Approved by Graduate Council, January 16, 2019. Effective date: Fall 2019 (8/12/2019)