

**GRADUATE POLICY COMMITTEE
MINUTES
October 11, 2010**

The following members were present: Nancy Marcus, Dean, The Graduate School; David Johnson, English, Chair; Young-Suk Kim, Education; Ithel Jones, Teacher Education; Eric Chicken, Statistics; Sudhir Aggarwal, Computer Science; William Fredrickson, Music; Jamila Horabin, Biomedical Science; Marc Gertz, Criminology; Ike Eberstein, Sociology; Bob Pekurny, Communication and Information; Rodney Roberts, Engineering; Ron Doel, Arts and Sciences; Brian Gaber, Film/Music; Rick Feiock, Social Sciences and Public Policy

The following members were absent – alternatives present are listed in parentheses: Stanley Gontarski, Arts and Sciences; Dianne Speake, Nursing; Bong-Soo Lee, Business; Tomi Gomory, Social Work; Gary Burnett, Communication and Information;

Also present: Judy Devine, Associate Dean, The Graduate School; Colin Creasy, The Graduate School; Melanie Booker, Admissions; Anne Rowe, Dean of the Faculties; Patrice Born, Business; Jennifer Buchanan, Associate Dean, Dean of the Faculties

The meeting was called to order at 3:35 P.M by David Johnson, Chair.

Approval of 9-13-10 Meeting Minutes – With no changes requested, the minutes were entered into the record.

Recommended Changes to the Bulletin Language – Dean Marcus began outlining a series of changes and corrections to the Graduate Bulletin based on her close reading of the text.

1. The first set of changes dealt with defense policy, including the composition and attendance required at a student's defense, unanimous agreement among committee members for a PASS, and the responsibilities assigned to persons regarding the Manuscript Signature Form and the Doctoral Defense Report. Dean Marcus went on to explain that the new Manuscript Signature form would be replacing the signature page on theses, treatises, and dissertations, and would be require for clearance of the student.

Dr. Gertz agreed with the changes, but questioned whether or not mailing the Manuscript Signature Form would be appropriate given committee members who may be remote (i.e. on sabbatical). Dean Marcus replied that she believed that even faxed signatures should be acceptable. Dr. Eberstein wondered if an electronic signature would be acceptable, and both Dr. Johnson and Dr. Aggarwal expressed their support for this. Dean Marcus wondered which method of electronic signature was most practical: scanned signatures or a software solution. Dr. Aggarwal replied that either could be viable solutions.

Dean Marcus then invited comments regarding the various aspects of the Manuscript Signature Form. Dr. Eberstein questioned the need for a separate grade from each member rather than just a signature, and Dr. Jones followed this up by asking why the chair could not just indicate a pass. Dr. Gertz argued that withholding a signature is the same as indicating a fail or not-pass. Many people commented that this does not "solve a dysfunctional committee," to which Dean Marcus agreed but said that the form is "quite clear with no room for interpretation." Dr. Eberstein voiced his concern regarding what a committee member would do in a situation where they will approve a PASS contingent on changes; Dr. Johnson explained that in this instance, the Major Professor would withhold a signature until changes were made.

Many voiced that there would be no manuscript if the committee failed the student. Dr. Gertz questioned the point of the form at all, as committees that didn't PASS the student might not submit a form at all; Dean Marcus argued that the form "substantiates the first University report," but agreed that it needed to be reworded, specifically "this form must be received by the Graduate School by the time the student submits the final version of the manuscript to the clearance advisor."

Dr. Jones wondered why the University Representative report had to be submitted within a week of the defense; Dean Marcus replied, "so that it doesn't fall through the cracks."

There was some confusion surrounding the differences between the various forms. Dean Marcus indicated that there's a technicality concerning the Defense (University Representative) report and the Manuscript form, in that one is dealing with the oral examination and the other deals with the written document: one can pass the oral defense, but still have changes that need to be made to the manuscript. Dr. Aggarwal followed this up by explaining that the University Representative report was simply a report that indicates whether or not procedures were followed at the defense, not a definitive pass/fail report.

Dean Marcus responded to these comments by saying that if the University Representative files a report, with a grade of Pass then all must sign the Manuscript Signature Form, but they do not need to be asked the pass/fail question. The Representative must indicate if a pass was given in their report so that the Graduate School clearance advisor knows when the 60-day rule is in effect.

Dr. Horabin wondered if this was related to departments that did not require unanimous decisions in committees; several members informed her that a unanimous decision had been voted into policy.

Dr. Aggarwal suggested that there be an option added to the University Representative form that indicates a "PASS with modifications." Dean Marcus indicated that these questions are asked.

Dean Marcus agreed to make the revisions to the Manuscript Clearance Form.

2. The second set of changes involved wording changes regarding credit hours. Dean Marcus argued that a master's student, unlike a doctoral candidate, may switch back and forth between working on additional coursework and thesis hours and thus should not be held to policy requiring a minimum of two credit hours of thesis work per semester after required coursework is finished.

Dean Marcus' proposed changes read:

A student who enrolls in thesis hours need not be enrolled continuously thereafter in thesis hours if they meet the minimum university requirements for full-time or part-time enrollment through other coursework. A student must be enrolled in a minimum of two thesis hours in the final semester. The minimum number of thesis hours required for the master's degree is six. Those with underload permission must register for at least two credit hours of thesis per semester. Underloads must be approved by the student's academic dean. Before registering for thesis hours, the student must consult the major professor as to the proportion of time to be devoted to thesis work.

Dr. Aggarwal expressed a concern that it might be possible that a student completes their thesis (and accompanying six thesis hours) before their coursework has been completed, but be required to register for two thesis hours in their final semester; Dr. Johnson argues that the language in the proposed revision, "fits reality" and was intended to help the Registrar. Dean Marcus used an example of Psychology Ph.D. students who are required to serve in internships after they defend the dissertation as an instance where

exceptions to this requirement can be made: the students are enrolled in “some credit hours” not necessarily dissertation hours in the last semester. Dr. Johnson argued that this change in policy will help students who don’t have their required courses available. Dr. Aggarwal clarified his concerns by stating that his issue is not with the two credit hours, his issue is requiring specifically two thesis hours in the last semester, which may or may not be useful to the student if they’re already registered for courses or “a seminar” in their final semester; Dean Marcus explained that the requirement for the two thesis hours also includes administrative costs to the university to clear the manuscript and complete the graduation process.

Dr. Eberstein asked how many students this policy change would effect; Dean Marcus replied that this has occurred with several engineering students as well as in the college of Arts & Sciences.

It was moved by Dr. Gertz and seconded by Dr. Jones to accept the following recommendation which reads:

A student who enrolls in thesis hours need not be enrolled continuously thereafter in thesis hours if they meet the minimum university requirements for full-time or part-time enrollment through other coursework. A student must be enrolled in a minimum of two thesis hours in the final semester. The minimum number of thesis hours required for the master's degree is six. Those with underload permission must register for at least two credit hours of thesis per semester. Underloads must be approved by the student’s academic dean. Before registering for thesis hours, the student must consult the major professor as to the proportion of time to be devoted to thesis work.

Passed

3. The third set of changes involved requirements at the Master’s level. These changes involved the choosing of major professors.

Dean Marcus’ proposed changes read:

The student should follow the convention of the major department to identify a major professor, who will serve as the student’s adviser and supervisor.

Dr. Gertz agreed with the changes, but was concerned that traditionally the department chair would sign off on the major professor; he feels that this change just needs to be “circulated” so that departments are clear.

Dean Marcus wondered if the statement should read “**major department or college**” as some programs don’t have departments, as is the case with Criminology.

Dean Marcus explained that she really wants to encourage the use of the Graduate Student Tracking system at the departmental level, so including that explicitly in the bulletin “gets that message across.”

Dean Marcus’ proposed changes read:

The department must enter the composition of the supervisory committee into the online Graduate Student Tracking system in a timely manner, but no later than the second week of classes In the semester that the student intends to graduate..

Dr. Eberstein wondered if the Graduate School really needed this information entered so early; Dean Marcus explained that this is a comparable time frame to registering for graduation and that the Graduate School needs this time to identify and clear up any potential problems.

Dr. Aggarwal explained that at the Masters-level, most students are being guided by their major professors and other members may not be actively involved.

Dr. Eberstein was concerned whether or not information entered was changeable; Dean Marcus assured him that the information was changeable and that this was simply a way to identify potential problems early and gave the Graduate School time to notify the departments.

Dr. Aggarwal noted that the “**In**” should be lowercase, Dr. Eberstein noted that the correction included two periods at the end of the statement, and Dr. Kim suggested that it should read “**department or college must enter**” to conform with changes made to the previous revision.

It was moved by Dr. Gertz and seconded by Dr. Horabin to accept the following recommendation which reads:

The student should follow the convention of the major department or college to identify a major professor, who will serve as the student’s adviser and supervisor.

and

The department or college must enter the composition of the supervisory committee into the online Graduate Student Tracking system in a timely manner, but no later than the second week of classes in the semester that the student intends to graduate.

Passed

Dean Marcus wondered if the policies added about unanimous committees in the Ph.D. section should be mirrored in the Masters section. Dr. Johnson suggested drafting up a revision for a later date, which Dr. Gertz and Dr. Aggarwal wondered if this even needed to be addressed.

4. The fourth set of changes involved the Program of Study within the Ph.D. section. Dean Marcus noted that many times, a student must design their program of study well before a committee is formed or a major professor is chosen.

Dean Marcus’ proposed changes read:

As soon as possible the student, under the supervision of a designated advisor or major professor, should prepare for approval a plan of courses to be taken. This program of study must be signed by the advisor or major professor and the chair of the major department. A copy of the student’s approved program of study is to be kept on file in the department. At the time of the annual review, changes to the plan should be noted and approved. Once designated the supervisory committee should be included as part of the approval process for any changes to the Program of Study.

Dr. Aggarwal argued that designing a course of study was not beneficial, as there are required courses that all students in a program must take; the focus, that is the course of study, is then defined by the thesis that they will be working on. Dean Marcus explained that in many programs this is a very important document, akin to a contract with the student, and that the existing policy didn’t make sense as often there

is no committee formed; the proposed change simply provides latitude to the student when designing a program of study.

Dr. Jones wondered why the change meant when it stated “designated advisor,” and could this be a staff person within a department. Dean Marcus explained that this would be left up the department’s discretion and that there could conceivably be a situation in which a staff person was advising doctoral students. Dr. Jones expressed his concerns that while the GPC was firming up policies surrounding other aspects of graduate education, this policy change seemed to be loosening university control.

Dr. Jones suggested the change read “designated faculty advisor,” and Dr. Johnson agreed.

Dr. Johnson noted to remove the extra “e’s” present in words.

It was moved by Dr. Gertz and seconded by Dr. Fredrickson to accept the following recommendation which reads:

As soon as possible the student, under the supervision of a designated faculty advisor or major professor, should prepare for approval a plan of courses to be taken. This program of study must be signed by the advisor or major professor and the chair of the major department. A copy of the student’s approved program of study is to be kept on file in the department. At the time of the annual review, changes to the plan should be noted and approved. Once designated the supervisory committee should be included as part of the approval process for any changes to the Program of Study.

Passed, with Dr. Aggarwal abstaining from the vote

5. The fifth set of changes involved Preliminary Examinations and the conversion of credits from DIS to dissertation hours. This policy, that had been carried out by Dean Marcus’ predecessor and has been continued by Dean Marcus herself, involves students converting DIS credits to dissertation hours when the student passes their preliminary examinations during the first half of a semester.

Dean Marcus’ proposed changes read:

Retroactive changes are only permitted if the preliminary examination is passed by the mid-point of the semester. This date will be posted on the Registrar’s calendar.

The preliminary examination is designed to test scholarly competence and knowledge and to afford the examiners the basis for constructive recommendations concerning the student’s subsequent formal or informal study. The form and content of this examination will be determined by the department, college, school, or examining committee (typically the same composition as the supervisory committee, but not necessarily) administering the degree program.

Dr. Aggarwal argues that the mid-semester cutoff was unfair as regardless of when they take the preliminary examinations, the students are most likely working on their dissertations. Dr. Johnson disagreed with this theory, saying that most likely, students are working on preparing for their preliminary exams up until they pass them rather than working on their dissertation. Dr. Gertz enthusiastically mirrored Dr. Johnson’s sentiments, stating that “students live in fear of the prelims” and thus all energy is focused on passing them.

Dr. Pekurny wondered if this was tied to the add/drop policy. Dr. Aggarwal informed him that this date would occur after add/drop. Dr. Johnson stated that this change was not consciously tied to add/drop.

Dean Marcus wondered how this occurred in different departments. Dr. Chicken responded that this policy addition would not affect his department as preliminary exams occur within the third week of the semester, and Dr. Eberstein notes that the spring exams in his department were later but that the policy was still reasonable in that it provides the students with an opportunity for a financial break.

Dr. Pekurny wondered what the intent of this policy was: is it intended to save money or time. Dr. Aggarwal argued that the real benefit was saving the students time, and Dr. Johnson responded that both money and time would be saved. Dean Marcus responded that, ultimately, the policy would be mutually beneficial financially for both students as well as the university.

Dr. Jones wondered if there could be exceptions made to this 8-week rule if there are situations out of the student's hands that prevent them from satisfying their preliminary exams before the cut off, and Dean Marcus notes that exceptions can be made if the student is not responsible for the delay.

Dr. Horabin noted that the wording should read "typically, but not necessarily, the same..." and this change was agreed upon.

It was moved by Dr. Gertz and seconded by Dr. Horabin to accept the following recommendation which reads:

Retroactive changes are only permitted if the preliminary examination is passed by the mid-point of the semester. This date will be posted on the Registrar's calendar.

The preliminary examination is designed to test scholarly competence and knowledge and to afford the examiners the basis for constructive recommendations concerning the student's subsequent formal or informal study. The form and content of this examination will be determined by the department, college, school, or examining committee (typically, but not necessarily, the same composition as the supervisory committee) administering the degree program.

Passed

Dr. Born noted that there was a section related to the Manuscript Signature Form that needed additional edits based on the decisions made previously.

Ph.D.-level Plagiarism – Dean Marcus began by identifying institutions in which plagiarism software is currently being used, specifically the University of Central Florida, Texas Tech, and Michigan Tech. She also noted that FSU no longer uses "Turnitin" and instead uses "Safe Assign," which has many limitations that don't allow it to catch as many problems as Turnitin: primarily, it does not have access to the wealth of paid journals and articles that Turnitin does, instead relying on freely available (open-source) articles and websites; the benefit is that Safe Assign costs less than Turnitin and is "better than nothing." Dr. Eberstein agreed that Safe Assign was both "appropriate and benign" and could help in the prevention of plagiarism.

Dr. Pekurny wondered at what stage would this plagiarism analysis happen, and Dean Marcus argued that the optimal time would be early on and carried out by the major professor.

Dr. Aggarwal commented that perhaps they should look into the "top ten universities" policies and procedures on plagiarism, and that optimally the committee members should be familiar enough with the material at large that such software would be rendered unnecessary due to their knowledge of articles. Dr. Johnson argues that these members "can't catch everything."

Dr. Kim wondered what the level of detail the software analyzed, be it sentence level, paragraph level, etc. Dean Marcus was unsure if there was a “minimum length of phrase” in which such software compared text. Dr. Kim then expanded upon her concerns by asking “what is considered plagiarism,” to which Dr. Eberstein argued that this should be defined at the committee level because of citation rules that may be unique. Dr. Kim continued by asking what the specific instances of plagiarism at FSU involved, to which Dean Marcus responded “the cases involved large blocks of text.”

Dr. Jones wondered what was the extent of plagiarism in dissertations at FSU in recent memory. Dean Marcus informed him that there have been “at least five” such cases though all did not result in a revocation of the degree. Dr. Jones argues that education of academic honesty may be more valuable than instituting a plagiarism policing system such as Turnitin as plagiarism does not begin at the dissertation level.

Dr. Fredrickson questioned whether or not Safe Assign would have caught the instances of plagiarism in the past. Dr. Buchanan responded that these had been caught with Turnitin, but that Safe Assign is catching instances on papers at both the graduate and undergraduate level.

Dr. Eberstein argues that this process is important because, even at the professional level, their papers will be run through computer analysis. Dr. Horabin agreed and mentioned that the generational shift and ease of plagiarism is fueling the need for these kinds of programs and analysis. Dr. Aggarwal wondered if this would just make students more sophisticated in their plagiarism, since students can change words yet still be stealing ideas.

Dr. Johnson suggested that the matter be researched further, and Dr. Pekurny suggested that simply having some system in place might protect the university from some problems in the future.

Retired Faculty as Major Professors – Dr. Johnson received an email regarding the possibility of retired faculty serving as major professors on new committees that have formed after their retirement in certain circumstances. He wanted the GPC to think about that for a future meeting.

With no new business to be presented, Dr. Johnson adjourned the meeting at 5:08 P.M.