

Memo

To:       Deans, Directors, and Department Chairs
From:   Mark Riley, Dean of The Graduate School
Re:       New and/or Revised Graduate Policies/Procedures
Date:   April 22, 2019

\*Please give careful attention to this memorandum. A copy of this memo will be posted on the Graduate School’s Faculty/Staff Website as well as uploaded to the Graduate Policy Database.

**New/Updated Graduate Policies:**

The following items were established as a new policy, were updated and/or are set to take effect in the 2019-2020 academic year.

1. Master’s Degree- Graduate Credit Hour Requirement:

**Effective Fall 2019, for new admits, to qualify for a master’s degree, a graduate student must complete a minimum of 30 semester hours of graduate credit (5000-level or above). For thesis-type programs, six of these credits must be thesis credits. (Approved by the GPC on 3/5/18 and Faculty Senate on 3/21/18).**

This amendment clarifies for SACS purposes that for master’s degrees, a minimum of 30 total semester hours need to be at the graduate-level (5000-level or above). Undergraduate courses at the 4000-level will no longer count in the minimum 30-total hour distribution. This does not mean that a student cannot take an undergraduate course at the 4000-level while enrolled as a graduate student. Nothing prevents or prohibits a graduate program from allowing a master’s students from enrolling in an undergraduate course. For such cases in which a graduate student takes a 4000-level course, it would be considered supplemental to his/her degree requirements and not count in his/her minimum total hour distribution or graduate GPA calculation. It should be noted that the GPC conducted extensive research on this policy change since 2015 and for the vast majority of the more than 100 master’s degree programs on campus, this clarifying statement will not pose any problem. Units are encouraged to work with the University Curriculum Committee to co-list courses at the 5000-level to follow this policy prior to Fall 2019. Units are also encouraged to update their sections of the Graduate Bulletin, Graduate Student Handbook, website, etc., if need be.

1. Federal Financial Aid and Degree Applicable Hours:

**See attached for the full policy. (Approved by the GPC on 1/28/19 and Faculty Senate on 2/20/19).**

Federal Financial Aid regulations related to student eligibility focuses on the determination of student and parent eligibility for financial aid that a student might qualify for under different circumstances. Most of these determining factors are dependent upon the classification of credits taken and earned as “degree applicable”. Federal Regulations allow for the institution to define what constitutes “degree applicable hours” within certain parameters. For this reason, the institution has determined that degree applicable hours is a broad category, rather than narrowly defined. In this context, the University has created a broad framework of advising requirements, monitoring check points and academic policies to ensure that students stay on course to timely graduation while simultaneously engaging in the liberal arts learning philosophy of the University.

1. College of Law Grading Scale:

**See below. (Approved by the GPC on 9/18/18 and Faculty Senate on 10/17/18).**

The GPC approved the College of Law’s proposal to change its grading scale from a numeric grading scale to a letter grading system with quality points. The College of Law adopted a transition plan to address any potential concerns about lack of notice and retroactive grading changes. Briefly, all current upper-division JD students will continue to receive numeric grades, and their transcripts will continue to report numeric grades from 60 to 100. The class entering in the Fall 2018 semester is the first class that has transcripts with grades using letter grades. Transition plans were also adopted for the LL.M and Juris Master degree programs. The College of Law also adopted a translation scheme for students who had been academically dismissed and are subsequently readmitted. The translation scheme would translate a readmitted student’s grades from numeric to letter grades. Students would be given notice of this translation scheme at the time they apply for readmission.

**Procedural Changes, Clarifications, and Reminders:**

1. Policy on Graduate Policy Committee (GPC) Proposal Submissions:

**Units planning to submit proposals to the Graduate Policy Committee need to establish their intent to file by the end of the third week of the semester in which they plan to file. All submissions or intentions to file notification should be submitted to James Beck (****jpbeck@fsu.edu****) at the Graduate School.**

The mission of the Graduate Policy Committee (GPC) is to help units around the university deliver the best possible graduate education. To this end, the GPC conducts graduate-level program reviews as part of the QER process, considers university-wide policy relating to graduate education, reviews departmental requests for GRE/GMAT waivers and reviews applications for new and combined/joint graduate degree programs. It’s important work, and we take it very seriously. To do this work well, we need to manage our time carefully. In order to coordinate units’ new proposal submissions and regularly scheduled unit reviews, this policy was established. Having advance notice of all submissions that will come in during any given semester will allow us to allocate adequate time for each agenda item. We would also like to point out that you are welcome to submit either your intent or your actual proposal early. In fact, the first few weeks of any semester are the best time for the GPC to be reviewing proposals. Thus, feel free to contact us now or over the summer in order to get scheduled for early fall semester.

1. Graduation Clearance Reminders:

**As a reminder, The Registrar’s Office will no longer be contacting students directly regarding any graduation deficiencies that they have. Furthermore, The Registrar’s Office will continue to check for university-wide requirements for all graduate students; however, they will not be checking for program-specific requirements. Below is a list of such items. The top portion covers all the university-wide requirements that The Registrar’s Office will continue to look for and the bottom portion of the memo shows the program-specific items that The Registrar’s Office will discontinue checking.**

The Graduation Staff will email the Deans office representatives with deficiencies that were found of students on the graduation list that week. This email will contain the student and the deficiency (or deficiencies) identified. The Dean’s office will email the student to their FSU account and the email will be placed in the student’s record.

For graduate students who have applied for graduation, The Registrar’s Office will check for the following:

Master’s-level (MA, MS, MFA, MSW, etc.):

* Minimum of 30 hours at 4XXX or above (Fall 2019, will check for a minimum of 30 hours at 5XXX or above)
* 3.0 < FSU GPA
* Minimum of 21 letter graded hours passed
* Work completed within 7 years of program start

For master’s students in a thesis plan code:

* Minimum of 6 hours of thesis
* Thesis defense
* Manuscript clearance approved
* Minimum of 18 letter-graded hours passed
* At least 2 hours of thesis in final semester/term

Specialist-level:

* Minimum of 30 hours at 4XXXX or above (Fall 2019, will check for a minimum of 30 hours at 5XXX or above)
* 3.0 < FSU GPA
* Minimum of 21 letter-graded hours passed
* Work completed within 7 years of program start

Doctoral-level:

* 3.0 < FSU GPA
* Prelim/Admission to candidacy date and completion within 5 years
* Prelim exam is passed at least 6 months prior to degree awarding
* 24 hours of dissertation
* At least 2 hours of dissertation in final semester/term
* 2 dissertation hours enrolled in each term of “enrollment” after passing the prelim exam
* Defense passed
* Manuscript clearance approved

Effective Fall 2018 and moving forward, for graduate students who have applied for graduation, The Registrar’s Office will **NOT** check for the following, as they are deemed program-specific requirements:

* Thesis, defense, or manuscript clearance for non-thesis plan codes
* Comprehensive exam or passing grade on comprehensive exam
* Total hours for degree beyond minimum of 30 hours
* Treatise manuscript clearance (unless in thesis plan code)
* Internship, clinical, recital, or fieldwork hours

\*Given the information above, it is imperative that programs make sure to place their graduate students on the correct track/program plan in Student Central in a timely manner. This is extremely important and is the responsibility of the program. For questions or assistance with this, please contact The Registrar’s Office.

1. Summer 2019 TA Certification Reminder:

Each semester in accordance with guidelines of the Commission on Colleges (SACS) and the standards outlined in the “University-wide Standards for Graduate Teaching Assistants” at Florida State University, the Academic Dean of each college is required to certify to the Vice President of Faculty Development and Advancement and the Dean of the Graduate School that each graduate student who serves as a graduate teaching assistant (TA) in the classroom or online is competent to teach at the level she or he is appointed and for international graduate teaching assistants (ITA) that they are also competent to teach in spoken English. The necessary qualifications for teaching are stated in the “University-wide Standards for Graduate Teaching Assistants” posted [here](http://policygradschool.fsu.acsitefactory.com/sites/g/files/upcbnu541/files/University%20Wide%20Standards%20for%20Graduate%20Teaching%20Assistants%20FINAL%20120314.pdf).

An online portal was created within the Graduate Student Tracking (GST) system to facilitate and streamline the certification process. The TA certification submission process is outlined below.

Each department should evaluate all their current and/or new graduate students to determine at which levels each is qualified to teach and if the student meets the requirement for competency in spoken English. This evaluation can be done by running the TA Student Level Evaluation report in GST. Programs should run this report in advance to determine the pool of students qualified and therefore eligible to serve as a TA. Please be aware that students eligible at Levels 1 & 2 may not be qualified to serve at Levels 3 & 4. The reports can be run to distinguish the levels. The reports provide essential information for making valid appointments.

1. Note: Students who do not meet the criteria for certification are denoted in GST (red “x” visible) and should not be appointed as a TA. A program should reassign such students to a non-TA position if they wish to continue funding them. If a program believes the data is not correct in GST or believes it has a justifiable reason for an exception, it should contact James Beck in The Graduate School. After the department has confirmed the qualifications and eligibility of their students, appropriate appointments should be made, after which a memo should be sent to the Academic Dean’s Office stating that their TAs are qualified to teach, and the TA certification process is complete.
2. The Academic Dean or Dean’s Office representative should evaluate the TA certification entries in GST and confirm that the college’s TAs are properly qualified.
3. After the Academic Dean or Dean’s Office representative has confirmed that all the college’s TAs are qualified, he/she should send an email to James Beck (jpbeck@fsu.edu).
* The email should simply state that the “college’s TA certification process is complete and that all TAs are competent in spoken English and qualified to teach at their level of appointment.”
* Do not include the names or IDs of individual students in the email.
* TAs need to be certified and emails need to be received by **May 8, 2019**
1. Summer 2019 Committee Analysis Report:

Each semester in accordance with university policy concerning the supervisory committee, the Academic Dean of each college is required to certify to the Dean of the Graduate School that the department or college has entered the composition of each student supervisory committee into the online Graduate Student Tracking system (GST) in a timely manner, but no later than the second week of classes in the semester the student intends to defend.

Steps to run report and submit documentation:

1. Each department should run the Committee Composition Analysis report in GST for both doctoral and master’s – thesis track students (not just those registered to graduate).
2. For students whose committees have a status of Pass or Locked, coordinators should confirm with students each semester if their committee has been altered since it was last updated. If departments do not have a committee revision form in use, you may use the attached template for students who need to update their committees on record.
3. If the status column is blank or Fail, coordinators should contact their students to obtain the committee composition and enter the members in GST under the Student Committee tab.
4. Committees must be entered in GST as soon as students form their committee and updated regularly as changes occur. No changes to the committee should occur after the second week of the semester of defense, except under extenuating circumstances.
5. The Academic Dean or Dean’s Office representative should evaluate the reports to determine that all committees are entered in a timely fashion. Only students not far enough along in the program to have a committee formed should remain blank.
6. After the Academic Dean or Dean’s Office representative has confirmed that all the college’s students have committees, he/she should send an email to James Beck (jpbeck@fsu.edu).
* The email should simply state that the “college’s committee analysis process is complete and all master’s thesis and doctoral dissertation students with formed committees have had their committee compositions entered/updated in GST.”
* Do not include the names or IDs of individual students in the email.
* Committees need to be certified and emails need to be received by **May 31, 2019.**
1. Report for 2019-2020 Dissertation Supervisory Committees:

The Graduate Policy Committee (GPC) established a university-wide policy on May 31, 1976 that “no faculty member should be serving as the major professor to more than ten students who have passed the preliminary examination stage but have not yet defended their dissertation.”

Please submit a memo to James Beck by **July 24, 2019** certifying that no professor in your unit exceeds this standard. If a faculty member is identified in one of your doctoral programs as not meeting this university requirement, please provide a detailed plan and timeline as to how your unit intends on rectifying the situation.

1. Manuscript Clearance Online Portal:

Over the last year, Manuscript Clearance has been developing and testing an online system for all forms related to the thesis/treatise/dissertation defense process. Starting Summer 2019, all colleges will be transitioning to this new system. Website updates are underway, and trainings are being offered on an as needed basis. Watch for any announcements from your college/department about scheduled trainings or contact laminor@fsu.edu. Paper forms will no longer by accepted for defenses occurring after April 22.

1. Combined, Direct-Entry and Joint Graduate Pathways Tracking in Student Central:

Each pathway requires admission and is available only to academically talented students. All programs must code their combined, direct-entry and joint pathway students correctly in Student Central for tracking purposes. I have outlined the technical steps below on how this should be done. Please be sure that the following steps are taken to follow the proper tracking protocol.

**Combined / Direct-Entry Pathway Tracking in Student Central:**

As soon as it is identified that a student is seeking a combined or direct-entry pathway, the advising track for Combined Degree should be added in Student Central.

* This should be added to the student’s current Undergraduate Program/Plan stack.
* The Academic Dean’s office should add a row to the Student Program tab similar to adding a second major or changing a major. The Program Action should be PLNC.
* On the Student Plan tab, a row should be added and the Academic Plan of COMBINEAV should be selected. You must ensure that the plan sequence for this new advising track is not “10”.
* Then Save.

**Joint Graduate Pathway Tracking in Student Central:**

Joint graduate pathways should have two program/plan stacks active simultaneously with the appropriate joint pathway academic plan code for each. For example, if a student is in the MSW/JD joint pathway, he/she will have a graduate career program/plan stack and a law program/plan stack. The graduate career will have the Social Work/Law plan and the law career will have the Law/Social Work plan. There are specific joint plan codes for each program. If a student has recently been admitted to a joint graduate pathway and you need the additional program/plan stack created, please email the request to RegistrarProcessing@admin.fsu.edu.

1. Continuous Enrollment Policy Reminder for Dissertation Hours:

\*Graduate student continuous enrollment at Florida State University is defined as enrollment without an interruption of two or more consecutive semesters (including Summer term). Credits earned at other institutions during any semester while not registered at Florida State University will not constitute continuous enrollment at the University. Students who are not enrolled at the University for two or more consecutive semesters (or consecutive semester and Summer term), and who are not on approved leave of absence, must apply for readmission before resuming their studies.

**Dissertation Hours:**

* A doctoral student who has completed the required coursework, passed the Preliminary Examination and submitted an Admission to Candidacy form to the Office of the Registrar, and continues to use campus facilities and/or receives faculty supervision, but has not made a final dissertation submission shall include in the required full-time load a minimum of two credit hours of dissertation per semester, including Summer term, until completion of the degree.
* A doctoral student must be enrolled in a minimum of two hours of dissertation in the semester of graduation.
* Those with underload permission must register for at least two credit hours of dissertation per semester (or term). Underloads must be approved by the student’s academic dean.
* Prior to degree conferral, all doctoral students must have completed a minimum of twenty-four credit hours of dissertation.

\*For the full policy on continuous enrollment pertaining to student course load requirements and graduate student appointments, please navigate to the Faculty/Staff Graduate School Website.