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To:       Deans, Department Chairs/Program Heads, and Graduate Coordinators  
From:   James Beck, Graduate Policy Program Coordinator

Re:       Summer 2020 Graduate School Policy and Procedure Memo

Date:   July 2, 2020

\*Please give careful attention to this memorandum, but please note that it is not exhaustive and faculty, staff, and students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with all policies affecting graduate education at FSU.

A copy of this memo will be posted on the [Graduate School’s Faculty/Staff Website](https://faculty-staff.gradschool.fsu.edu/caslogin) as well as uploaded to the [Graduate Policy Database](https://policy.gradschool.fsu.edu/).

**New/Updated Graduate Policies:**

The following items were established as a new policy, were updated and/or are set to take effect in the 2020-2021 academic year.

1. Master’s Program Definitions and New Project Master’s Degree-Type:

**Effective Fall 2020, there will three types of master’s degree programs at FSU: thesis, coursework-only, and project. In May, Academic Deans were contacted to work with their Department Chairs and Graduate Program Directors to carefully review the new definitions, evaluate each of the master’s degree program’s curriculum and identify which master’s degree programs are thesis, coursework only, or project. The Academic Deans confirmed the status for each of the master’s degree programs and this information was sent to the Registrar’s Office. The definitions have been incorporated in the Graduate Bulletin and new plan codes have been developed in Student Central for the project master’s programs. See attached for the new definitions. (Approved by the GPC on 3/9/20 and Faculty Senate on 4/22/20).**

Currently, the Graduate Bulletin distinguishes between two types of master’s degree programs – thesis and non-thesis. The Graduate Policy Committee (GPC) and Faculty Senate have approved to change this to three types: thesis, coursework-only, and project.

The goal of this policy is to: 1) distinguish between work taking the scope of a thesis, 2.) work taking the scope of a course or capstone experience and 3.) recognize creative achievement and activity taking the scope of a terminal project as its own master’s-type program.

At present, various units use thesis-type language for courses and student work that are not equivalent in scope to a thesis. In addition, some units register students for thesis credit hours though the student is in a non-thesis program. These irregularities are an issue and we need to move forward with clear definitions, so students’ transcripts correctly reflect the type and scope of work they have completed. With centrally defined language, guidelines now exist for units to classify student work appropriately. The growth and evolution of the broad array of graduate programs required a policy to define and differentiate the nature of the different programs. The attached policy provides clear definitions, defines the scope, and sets minimum requirements while allowing units flexibility in nomenclature that suits their discipline-specific needs.

\*Keep in mind that coursework-only and project master’s programs are non-thesis and cannot be deemed equivalent to a thesis program, meaning that under these program-types students cannot enroll in thesis hours, a thesis defense, and/or courses with “thesis” in the title. Only thesis-track master’s students are allowed to enroll in thesis hours, a thesis defense and/or courses with “thesis” in the title.

1. Revision to Conflict of Interest Policy:

**See attached for the full policy. (Approved by the GPC on 3/27/20 and Faculty Senate on 4/22/20).**

The Graduate Policy Committee (GPC) and Faculty Senate approved a revision to the Conflict of Interest Policy, which was last approved by the Faculty Senate in 2013. The revised policy now restricts immediate family members, domestic partners and married couples from serving together on the same supervisory committee to prevent a perception of bias (i.e., conflict of interest); defines what “immediate family members” means; clarifies that exceptions are allowed under extenuating circumstances, however, not for a committee chair (or co-chair) and university representative combination; describes how to report a conflict of interest and to whom; and sets an implementation date of Fall 2020 for new thesis and doctoral admits.

Grandfathering will be allowed for thesis and doctoral students (those admitted to candidacy) who currently have immediate family members, domestic partners or married couples serving on the supervisory committee together, as long as it does not involve a Committee Chair (or Co-Chair) and University Representative for doctoral students.

1. Revision to Grade Appeals System:

**See attached for the full policy. (Approved by the GPC on 3/27/20 and Faculty Senate on 4/29/20).**

The Office of Faculty Development and Advancement (OFDA) drafted a revision of the Grade Appeals System, which was last revised by the Faculty Senate in 2005. The revision eliminates outdated “Dean of the Faculties” and “Dean of Graduate Studies” language; changes undefined “days” to “class days,” with a definition that stops the clock any time (such as over winter break) classes are not in session and excludes weekends; expands the term “department chair” to “department chair, school director, or designee;” clarifies how soon meetings should occur; and states that department chairs, school directors, or designees who have arranged grade appeal meetings are allowed to attend those meetings. The revision maintains the standard of proof and the other basic principles of the current Grade Appeals System.

1. Graduate Bulletin Edits:

Sections of the Graduate Bulletin have been amended to reflect some changes in existing procedures. The following items do not represent substantive policy changes, but editing was done to improve the clarity of the message.

1. **Graduate Academic Regulations and Procedures**-
2. Incomplete Grade Section- Revised to emphasize that an incomplete grade should not be set as the default grade for an existing incomplete. Grades are awarded based on progress of work completed during a set semester/term and as such, a graduate student should not receive several semesters of incomplete grades for thesis, treatise and/or dissertation hours until completion of the defense.
3. **Graduate Degree and Certificate Requirements-**
4. Dual Degree Section- Revised to emphasize that Dual Enrollment Request Forms must be submitted for review/approval at the correct time to ensure proper advisement, prior to the graduate student completing 12 hours in the second degree program and before the student has reached the final semester and applied for graduation so there are no delays in graduation clearance.
5. Combined and Joint Pathways Section- Removal of Direct-Entry Pathways from the bulletin.
6. Types of Programs Section- Inclusion of new master’s definitions approved by GPC and Faculty Senate.
7. Receny of Work Section (Master’s) - Revised to emphasize that If the master’s degree is not completed within seven years from the time the student first registers for graduate credit, and the program and/or Department Chair does not choose to approve an Extension of Time (EOT), then the student may no longer be enrolled in that program or at Florida State University.
8. Supervisory Committee Sections (Master’s and Doctoral) - Inclusion of revised conflict of interest policy approved by GPC and Faculty Senate.
9. Preliminary Examination Section- Revised to emphasize that if a student fails the preliminary examination prior to admission to candidacy, a re-examination may be requested, but it must be recommended by the student’s supervisory committee and approved by the Academic Dean’s Office. Students can take the preliminary examination for admission to candidacy only two times. At least one semester of additional preparation is needed before the re-examination. A second failure on the preliminary exam makes the student ineligible to continue in the degree program.
10. Time Limit for Completion of Doctoral Degree Requirements Section- Revised to emphasize that all requirements for the doctoral degree must be completed within five calendar years from the time the student passes the preliminary examination and is admitted to candidacy. If the student’s major professor and/or Department Chair does not choose to either approve an Extension of Time (EOT) or require the student to take the preliminary exam and/or coursework again for readmission to candidacy, then the student may no longer be enrolled in that program or at Florida State University.
11. Faculty Academic Judgement Section- Revised to provide additional clarity on student continuance in a program.
12. **University-Wide Standards for Graduate Teaching Assistants**-
13. TA Certification Process- Revised to emphasize that colleges/units need to validate that each TA is serving their designated instructional assignment in the classroom **before** certifying to the Vice President of Faculty Development and Advancement and the Dean of The Graduate School that the TA certification process is complete. TAs serving as the instructor of record (IOR) for an undergraduate-level course need to be qualified to serve in this role prior to the start of the semester, appointed under the correct job code (M9184), and assigned to the course in Student Central. \*\***Students who do not meet the criteria for certification should not be appointed as a TA, serve as the instructor of record for any undergraduate-level course,** **or receive access to a Canvas site**.
14. TA Levels 1-2- Revised to emphasize that TA level types 1 and 2 presume that the graduate teaching assistant is performing instructional duties for undergraduate students ONLY. This involves limited direct contact with undergraduate students. **Under no circumstances, should a graduate TA be allowed to grade, tutor, proctor, lead recitation/discussion sections, etc. for a graduate student.**
15. TA Levels 3-4- Revised to emphasize that TA level types 3 and 4 presume the graduate teaching assistant is the Instructor of Record (IOR) for an undergraduate course section ONLY. **Normal policy forbids a graduate TA from being the IOR and teaching a graduate course. This includes co-listed sections.** The instructor of record (IOR) policy was also referenced in the university-wide standards for additional clarity.

**Reminders:**

1. 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**](mailto:jpbeck@fsu.edu)**) in 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 pathway programs. It’s important work, and the group takes it very seriously. To do this work well, I need to manage the GPC’s 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 me to properly allocate adequate time for each agenda item. I 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 me as soon as possible in order to get scheduled for early fall semester.

1. Combined 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 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 Pathway Tracking in Student Central:**

As soon as it is identified that a student is seeking a combined 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](mailto:RegistrarProcessing@admin.fsu.edu).

Please contact James Beck at ([jpbeck@fsu.edu](mailto:jpbeck@fsu.edu)) if you have any questions about the policy and the Registrar’s Office if you require assistance in setting up the program plans in Student Central.

1. Graduate Certificate Policy:

It is imperative that units comply with all aspects of the Certificate Policy, especially the requirement that students apply for admission and be accepted as soon as possible (and prior to completing the second course in the program). If a student is accepted into the certificate program, it is the unit’s responsibility thereafter to notify the Registrar’s Office immediately. This is important for tracking and reporting purposes for the university and SACSCOC accreditation. For example, units should not be waiting until a graduate student has reached the final semester and applied for graduation to attempt to admit the student into the certificate program.

\*Additionally, units need to follow the program of studies that was approved in the proposal. Please refer to the matrix that was included in the original proposal paperwork which illustrates the specific required and elective courses that can be counted towards the graduate certificate. Keep in mind, that an undergraduate certificate shall not require the completion of graduate courses.

The certificate policy can be found on the [Office of Faculty Development and Advancement’s Website](https://regulations.fsu.edu/sites/g/files/upcbnu486/files/policies/fda/FSU%20Policy%203A-1.pdf).

1. Dual Degree and Time Extension Request Forms:

Dual degrees are two degrees earned simultaneously when a graduate student is accepted by both departments/programs and a Dual Enrollment Request Form is approved by the appropriate academic deans and the Dean of the Graduate School. There is no formal relationship between the two-degree program requirements in a dual degree situation.

\*As a reminder, Dual Enrollment and Time Extension Request Forms need to be submitted for review and approval at the proper time. It is not appropriate to wait until the student has reached the final semester and applied for graduation to submit these forms for retroactive approval. For example, it would not be appropriate to wait until Fall 2020 to submit a dual enrollment or time extension request form for review/approval, if the student actually needed it back in Spring 2018. It is imperative that units carefully monitor their graduate students and be sure these forms are submitted at the correct time to ensure proper advisement and avoid any delays in graduation clearance.

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 [Graduate School’s Faculty/Staff Website](https://faculty-staff.gradschool.fsu.edu/caslogin).

All the best,

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