

UNL Graduate Council Minutes
August 16, 2018

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln Graduate Council met at 3:30 p.m. August 16, 2018 in 206 Seaton Hall. Present were: Professors Christina Falci, Clint Rowe, Laurie Lee, Yusong Li, Jennifer Clarke, Kara Viesca, Rhonda Fuelberth; Graduate Student Assembly representative: President Julia Reilly; Absent: Graduate Student Assembly representative: Shawn Ratcliff. Dean Tim Carr presided.

Approval of the April 12, 2018 Minutes

The minutes were approved as written.

Role of Graduate Council, quorum definition & meeting frequency

Dean Carr described recent efforts by the OGS staff to research history of policy to determine the basis of practice and processes. The topics below are a result of that research.

1. Role of the Graduate Council - Graduate College Policy Handbook. Dean Carr described in general the contents of the policy handbook. He reviewed the importance of the Graduate Council as the administrative body for graduate education on the UNL campus. The Dean presides over the Council and participates in discussion, but shall cast a vote only in case of a tie.
2. Meeting time and frequency: Dean Carr brought forward the importance of the Graduate Council to make time for discussion on policy issues beyond routine action items involving curriculum. He proposed that the Graduate Council do more online voting for action items. Dean Carr proposed to the Council that the meetings could start one hour earlier or the Council could try to meet twice per month for 90 minutes. Discussion followed with the conclusion that most of the Council would rather come earlier than try to find an additional day in their schedules to meet. Consequently, the Graduate Council will continue to meet on the third Thursday of each month, but start at 2:30 p.m. and go until 5:00 p.m. A change back to the regular time could occur if the extended time is no longer needed.
3. Quorum: Dean Carr asked the Council to define what constitutes a quorum for this council. A motion was made to establish the quorum as a simple majority of all voting members exclusive of the Dean (ex-officio). Motion passed.

Select Alternate Member for Executive Graduate Council

Christina Falci and Clinton Rowe are the current representatives of the UNL Graduate Council to the Executive Graduate Council. The UNL Graduate Council must select an Alternate representative to the EGC in case one of the regular members is unable to attend a meeting. Dean Carr explained the role of the EGC and the importance for having UNL representation. Laurie Lee stated she was willing to be nominated as the Alternate member for a three year term. It was moved to appoint Laurie Lee as Alternate member. Motion passed.

Consent agenda - course approval

Dean Carr reminded the Council that, according to the agreed upon procedure, proposed course changes and new course proposals submitted for consideration will be made available in a consent agenda prior to each meeting. Courses will be considered “approved” if no member raises any questions prior to the meeting. For those courses with questions raised by any member of the Council, Dean Carr will follow up with the proposing programs. Once he receives an answer, he will send it to the Council via email for review or present to the Council at the following meeting.

After reviewing the Graduate College Policy Handbook, Dean Carr talked about the policy that addresses the role of the Graduate Council in evaluating new or modified graduate programs. “Program” is interpreted to include individual courses and curriculum. He reviewed historical documents to determine what procedures have been used in presenting courses to the Council for review. Dean Carr opened up for discussion the possibility that the Dean of Graduate Education, in consultation with OGS staff, could handle simple course changes (e.g., proposed changes to prerequisites, titles, descriptions) on behalf of the Council. After discussion, it was agreed that the Dean will approve simple course changes. However, the Council will continue reviewing all new courses; significant course changes; and all curriculum changes. The Dean will determine whether proposed courses are put on the consent agenda or the regular meeting agenda.

Grade appeals revision

Dean Carr reviewed the current published policy and procedure for UNL graduate student grade appeals, originally approved in March 1993. The policy directs the student “to resolve the matter with the course instructor” as the first step, but the policy does not define a time frame. Dean Carr suggested a revision to include a deadline for initiating the first step. The revision would state, “...to resolve the matter with the course instructor *within 30 days of the posting of the grade report by the office of the University Registrar.*” A question was raised clarifying the process if a student doesn’t hear from instructor after making the first attempt to contact. Dean Carr suggested that if the student has initiated an appeal (and demonstrated they have) within 30 days, and if the instructor fails to respond, then the student can contact the Dean under a different section of the policy which states, “If the matter is unduly delayed or not resolved, the student may present the original appeal documentation to the Dean.” A motion was made to accept the revision as suggested. Motion passed.

Supervisory Committee - Special Member

Dean Carr explained there is confusion at the faculty level between Courtesy member in a department and Courtesy member on a graduate student’s committee. Dean Carr suggested that the Council change the name of the role supervisory committees to “Special Member.” Following a brief discussion, a motion was made to change the name of Courtesy Member to Special Member. Motion passed.

Further discussion ensued regarding the catalog description of the roles of supervisory committee members. It was requested that the description of committee Chair be revised to include "Chair or Co-Chair." It was also requested the description of Outside Representative be clarified to include the rationale for having an outside committee member. Dean Carr will explore the historical documents to find the original intent of having outside members. He will also try to clarify the meaning of "outside" member for interdisciplinary programs and report back to the Council.

Proposed curriculum change for graduate certificate in Sensory Disabilities

Dean Carr explained the review process for this certificate. Several questions were raised. First, there appears to be an error in the proposal justification, "For students who had not taken SPED 960 or its equivalent, we would advise them to take SPED 860, SPED 863, or SPED 960 instead." SPED 960 should be SPED 861. Second, the proposal states that all courses in the certificate must be taken UNL. There is no university-wide policy that requires all courses to be taken at UNL, although individual programs can establish such a rule. Programs offering a certificate typically follow the same rules governing degree programs in which the majority of courses must be taken at UNL (in the current proposal, that would be 3 of the 4 courses in the certificate). Third, the Council requested more detail on SPED 960 being a prerequisite for SPED 861. Is department assuming that if a student took a SPED 960 equivalent elsewhere, that it would be an adequate prerequisite for SPED 861? And why is a 900-level a prerequisite for an 800-level? Dean Carr will contact the department for clarification.

Moved agenda items to next Graduate Council meeting

9. Proposed certificate in Forensic Anthropology
10. Proposed certificate in Museum Studies
11. Graduate Student Assembly Report – first meeting in September. Some welcome events are planned.

Additional topics to be discussed this year

- Shorten time limit for masters degree and certificates
- "Professional" program definition
- Spouses serving on same supervisory committee
- Graduate Faculty Associate status

There were no announcements. Dean Carr reminded the Council the next meeting is September 20 at 2:30 p.m. (starting one hour earlier than normal).

Meeting adjourned at 5:04 pm.