

Graduate Council

2015-16 End-of-Year Report

The following report includes the period from May 2015 through April 2016, including the summer months of June and July.

Summary of Tasks Completed:

1. 32 faculty applications for graduate faculty status were processed.
2. 46 student appeals or requests for time extension were processed.
3. Deadline for agenda items approved, disseminated, and enforced.
4. By-laws revised and approved (Subcommittee: Luse, Sylvester, Tolson)
5. Practice established of council chair signing off on faculty recommendations, and Graduate School director returning relevant paperwork to the programs for archiving.
6. Appeals checklist drafted by Graduate School and approved by Council.
7. Language for guidelines for appeals on Graduate School website revised.
8. Began revising language regarding admissions on Graduate School website to increase clarity; includes revisiting verbiage regarding GRE score calculations (Subcommittee: Sylvester)
9. Began examining policy concerning need for graduate students completing dissertations and theses to be continually enrolled in thesis hours until graduation.

The council has had a very productive year, with a number of important improvements to policies and procedures that have helped to facilitate smoother processing of appeals as well as the functioning of the Graduate School and the council itself.

The first set of policies to be considered in the fall were the creation and enforcement of a deadline for agenda items for consideration at the next regularly scheduled meeting, and the creation of an appeals checklist. The new chair was concerned that in previous years the council was tabling too many agenda items and engaging in unnecessarily contentious discussion over details of cases. She determined that this was because too many cases appeared on the agenda without adequate documentation, coupled with the fact that many agenda items appeared on the Moodle site with less than 24 hours' notice, resulting in the inability of council members being able to review the agenda items in advance of meetings, as well as the inability of the chair to review items before placing them on the agenda. These conditions resulted in laboriously reviewing agenda items during the meeting and in confused discussions, only often to discover that the council lacked important documents and the item would have to be tabled. The Graduate School proposed a checklist to accompany student appeals so that its staff could establish that all required documents were in fact attached to the case. The chair emphasized that she would not allow on the agenda any cases that did not have all checklist-required documents, since they would only be tabled. The chair proposed that the council establish a 72-hour deadline in advance of the next regularly scheduled meeting for all agenda items to be uploaded to Moodle (with exceptions being considered on a case-by-case basis). The chair also began the practice of reviewing agenda items in advance of meetings and posting summaries of key points in Moodle to speed the absorption of information prior to

decision-making. These were approved by the council, and they have resulted in more efficient meetings.

The practice was established of the chair signing the forms for faculty appointment to full graduate faculty status, and then the Graduate Director returning those forms and attached documents to the relevant program for archiving. Previously, the approved forms appear to have remained in the Graduate School. This change, it is intended, will allow the programs to better track which of their faculty have been approved for graduate faculty status.

Next, the council revised the language regarding Appeals for Admission, Readmission, and Continuance on the Graduate School website and in the catalog, as it was determined that these were inconsistent and confusing. The council also approved revision of the Conditional Status for admission, and a priority track for admission.

In November, the chair appointed, or rather reappointed, the subcommittee to revise the by-laws (Luse, Sylvester, Tolson). The subcommittee had originally been appointed in 2012-13. The final revision was produced and approved by the council in February 2016.

In April, the council approved changes to the language on the Graduate School website and catalog explaining how, when, and by whom appeals should be prepared to come before the council. The council also began reviewing and revising the verbiage pertaining to GRE scores for admission, finding the current language too difficult to interpret. A subcommittee was appointed (Sylvester) to consult with a mathematician concerning the proper way to establish conversion scores between old and new GRE, but this process has not yet been completed.

A final policy review is in process at the end of the year concerning the need for graduate students writing dissertations and theses to be continuously enrolled in dissertation hours until graduation.

Amy Dagley will be leaving ULM at the end of spring 2016 and so will need to be replaced on the council by another member from Education. The chair wishes to defer any other recommendations for reappointment or replacement until the beginning of fall 2016 so as to have time to consult with relevant university constituents.

Lastly, while in summer 2015 the chair was able and willing to lead meetings during the summer months, despite not being under contract, this year she will be traveling and performing research and will again not be under contract to teach. Per special request, a meeting will be held in late May after the end of the semester to address appeals for continuation in summer. An interim chair will need to be established for any special meetings during June-July 2016. Historically, most members are willing to meet even if they are not under contract and thus further the work of the council, but some are not, and it is important to note that they are not legally required to meet if they are not under contract.