

**The University of Alabama in Huntsville
Graduate Council Meeting
Minutes**

**Friday / January 19, 2024
2:00 p.m. via Zoom**

Members Present: Mike Anderson, COE*
Maria Pour, COE
Keith Hollingsworth, COE
Nicholas Loyd, COE
Wafa Hakim-Orman, COB*
Xiaotong Li, COB
Jodi Price, CAHS*
Dylan Baun, CAHS
Lisa Vangsness, CAHS
Joe Conway, CAHS
Lingze Duan, COS*
Larry Carey, COS
Tanya Sysoeva, COS
Nilsa Black-Meade, CON
Lenora Smith, CON
Tracy Lakin, CON
Paul Whitehead, CoED
Hamsa Mahafza, CoED
Jon Hakkila, Chair*
David Moore, Library*
Amy Smith, Registrar*
Suzanne Simpson, OIREA*

Members Absent: Sophia Marinova, COB (on sabbatical Spring 2024)
Ming Sun, COS
Louise O’Keefe, CON*
Derrick Smith Replacement, CoED*

Guests: Amber Adcock, Office of Registrar
Susan Knight, Graduate School
Simone Frazier, Graduate School
Michelle Massey, Graduate School
Audrey Jupiter, Graduate School
Jennifer Bruzek, CoED
Letha Etzkorn, COS
Paul Wolf, COS
Gary Zank, COS

**Non-Voting Member*

1. Roll Call

A record of attendance was recorded as noted above.

2. Approval of the Agenda

Motion was made by Dr. Hamsa Mahafza to approve the graduate council meeting agenda. Motion was seconded by Dr. Lisa Vangness. Motion carried.

3. Approval of the Minutes of the Meeting of December 1, 2023

Motion was made by Dr. Hamsa Mahafza to approve the minutes of the meeting of December 1, 2023. Motion was seconded by Dr. Lenora Smith. Motion carried.

4. Announcement(s)

- a. Recent Graduate School Events
 - i. Spring Orientation for Graduate Students – January 4, 2024
- b. Extended deadline for oral defense and submission of Kuali signature form (March 18 vs. March 11)

Dr. Hakkila and the graduate school staff provided information about the graduate-focused event/item as noted above.

- c. Graduate Assistantship New Offer Letter

Ms. Michelle Massey stated that on Friday, January 12th, an email was sent from Academic Affairs to all faculty, college Deans, and the college Deans' administrative assistants introducing this new offer letter. This new letter will be issued to all new, first-time students, both international and domestic. The usual Assistantship contract will still be used for recording the financial/funding details of the Assistantship.

5. Curricular Items

- a. (CoED) MS ABA – Applied Behavior Analysis - **Conditionally approved with course types labeled as "Pass/Fail" for ABA 610, ABA 611, ABA 612, ABA 613, ABA 614. Also, will consider re-numbering courses to provide "gap" in the event new courses need to be added in the future.**
- b. (CoED) ABA 610 – ABA Practicum I - **Conditionally approved with "Pass/Fail" course type across ABA 610, 611, 612, 613, 614; also, course might be renumbered.**
- c. (CoED) ABA 611 – ABA Practicum II - **Conditionally approved with "Pass/Fail" course type across ABA 610, 611, 612, 613, 614; also, course might be renumbered.**
- d. (COS) BYS 620 – Microbial Biotechnology - **Conditionally approved with change to Course Description in syllabus.**
- e. (COS) CS 517 – Intensive Computing Theory - **Approved**
- f. (COS) CS 521 – Intensive Intro Programming - **Approved**
- g. (COS) CS 547 – Game Engines & Level Dev - **Approved**
- h. (COS) SPA 620 – Intro to Remote Sensing Space - **Conditionally approved with addition of "Instructor Approval Required"**
- i. (COS) SPA 665 – Stochastic Methods Comp Sci – **Approved**

6. Graduate Faculty Nominations – For Membership Consideration

- a. (CON) Flowers, Rebekah (MD) - **Approved**
- b. (CON) Kuntz, Audrey (EdD) - **Approved**

7. Simultaneous Registration of 699/799 Credit Hours

Ms. Michelle Massey explained that, moving into the Spring 2024 term, the Graduate School has noted several examples of departments allowing dual registration of 699 thesis hours and 799 dissertation hours during the same semester. The explanation from departments for this type of dual enrollment is to enable students to complete their last semester of thesis requirements in preparation for their thesis defense, while also allowing them to begin research on their dissertation. The Graduate School finds this practice to be inconsistent with students having to complete the Master's degree thesis requirements before beginning the PhD.

The PhD Degree Requirements for the Qualifying Exam in the Academic Catalog state: "The Qualifying Examination is given under the auspices of the Graduate School and must be administered by the supervisory committee within one year of the date the student completes the formal coursework on the Program of Study. It is conducted in two distinct stages, which may be separated by a length of time deemed appropriate by the supervisory committee. The first stage is a demonstration through written and oral examination that the student is proficient in the subject matter in the Program of Study. The final stage is the dissertation proposal review in which the student prepares a written report and makes a subsequent oral presentation describing the proposed dissertation research. Both the dissertation topic and expected approach(es) must be clearly delineated to the committee's satisfaction in order for a pass to be granted. The presentation of the oral dissertation research proposal must be scheduled through the Graduate School at least two weeks in advance. Once this review is complete, the results of the Qualifying Examination are reported to the Graduate School within two working days on the prescribed form. The presentation of the oral dissertation proposal may be given no more than twice."

The master's thesis and defense are part of the formal coursework component of the doctorate, which must occur prior to the student beginning to take dissertation credits. If a student starts 799 dissertation courses, this implies that the student has already presented a dissertation proposal review, which should not have happened until after the Qualifying Exam has been completed. The Qualifying Exam should include a review of all coursework, and the master's thesis and defense are part of that coursework.

In conclusion, Ms. Massey said that we cannot promote this practice of allowing students to be registered for both 699 and 799 if they have not successfully defended their thesis.

Dr. Hakkila added that this practice corresponds with making sure that progression requirements are clearly defined across all colleges, and part of that progression is that students need to go through a process whereby they finish their coursework, propose their dissertation, and then begin taking dissertation hours, which starts the continuous enrollment clock. If a student begins taking dissertation hours earlier, that will also start the continuous enrollment clock, which is not the goal of having a pre-preliminary exam and a post-preliminary exam segment of the PhD process. So, we would like to strongly discourage allowing students to enroll in 699 and 799 courses at the same time, especially with the SACSCOC re-affirmation coming for which we must start collecting data that support establishing our processes at least two years prior to the review to demonstrate to SACSCOC that we have well defined procedures.

After discussions initiated by Dr. Mike Anderson, Dr. Maria Pour, and Dr. Larry Carey, Dr. Hakkila suggested that programs wanting to delineate a pre-dissertation component for the dissertation might want to consider creating a dissertation proposal course that is not numbered 799, but 798 instead, since we otherwise cannot determine where the preliminary portion ends and the dissertation portion begins. Another suggestion would be to create a research course.

Dr. Hakkila indicated the Graduate School will continue to work on this issue with individual programs as it relates to progression but reiterated that we do want to ensure that there is a well defined break point between Masters and PhD coursework. In the end, it was agreed that students should not take 699 and 799 courses during the same semester.

8. Revision of Graduate Conditional Admission Policy

Dr. Jon Hakkila explained that this proposal to revise the Graduate Conditional Admission Policy has surfaced because the Graduate School has been tracking probation and dismissal cases. Prior to tracking these cases, students with zero GPAs were being treated the same way as students who had withdrawn from courses since they also had zero GPAs. There are some students who have been enrolled at UAH for many semesters who have accrued zero GPAs after, in some cases, 20-something credit hours and have never received a probation or dismissal notice. Dr. Hakkila said we are correcting these cases as we become aware of them.

Ms. Michelle Massey followed, saying that the Graduate School proposes to revise the current "Conditional Admission" policy for graduate students to mimic the "Academic Probation and Dismissal" policy, since the two policies are almost the same except for one, small nuance described below.

The current policy for "Conditional Admission" states: "The Graduate School may conditionally admit applicants who do not satisfy all of the requirements for unconditional admission, but who do show reasonable potential for doing graduate work. Conditional admission requires the approval of the chair of the department in which the applicant plans to pursue an advanced degree. If a conditionally admitted student has an overall grade average of B (3.000) or better for all graduate work attempted up to and including the semester in which the student completes 12 semester hours of graduate work at UAH, then the student assumes the status of an unconditionally admitted student. Otherwise, the student is dismissed from the Graduate School. Under exceptional cases, a student may be readmitted upon a justified recommendation of the faculty in the student's major department and approval of the Graduate Dean."

The proposed policy revision would allow students to be admitted conditionally on academic probation status (APS). They would have the same allowance of 12 credit hours over the course of three consecutive semesters to establish a 3.000 GPA, or better, to reach unconditional admission status. The intent of this revision is to limit confusion about how the two policies differ from each other and provide conditionally admitted students a more flexible grace period to achieve a 3.000 GPA upon completion of the first 12 credit hours in their program.

Ms. Massey continued saying the conditional admission policy is not in the current version of the Quali catalog and suggested the Graduate School send a policy proposal thru Quali Curriculum Management for discussion/vote at the next Graduate Council meeting. She reiterated that, for now, this is a potential policy revision for consideration.

Dr. Hamsa Mahafza asked whether anyone had checked to see how other universities handle these two policies. Ms. Massey explained that no one has checked, because it seems that both of these policies are so similar that it can be an easy fix while allowing conditionally admitted students more flexibility to reach unconditional status.

Dr. Larry Carey asked whether this proposal is GPA related versus a conditional admission with very specific parameters to be met outside of the GPA. Dr. Hakkila confirmed that this proposal is based on GPA but he supports expanding it to provide programs more flexibility for what they constitute conditional admission that goes beyond the GPA.

Dr. Mahafza reiterated that we should find out how other universities handle these policies, and Dr. Hakkila agreed this would occur.

Dr. Wafa Hakim-Orman asked for clarification of the difference between this proposal and the existing policy, to which Dr. Hakkila replied that, under the new proposal, students will have 12 hours to raise their GPA to a 3.000 rather than simply be dismissed when falling below a 3.000 as the current policy stipulates.

9. For the Good of the Order

Dr. Mike Anderson asked about the reason for the delay in providing the list of GTA names to the Financial Aid and Bursar offices at the beginning of this current semester, which concerned several graduate students who received tuition invoices. Ms. Audrey Jupiter explained that the delay should not happen again and that it occurred because the colleges had to prepare and submit new assistantship letters due to an increase in the stipend amount.

Dr. Maria Pour asked, “when admitting new students into the PhD program who have both an undergraduate degree and a master’s degree, does the Graduate School require the minimum 3.000 GPA on both degrees or just the master’s degree?” Dr. Hakkila confirmed that only the master’s degree minimum GPA is considered when applying to the PhD program.

Dr. Hamsa Mahafza asked when the next JUMP Committee meeting will be scheduled. Dr. Hakkila explained that a JUMP Committee meeting will be scheduled as soon as possible after a meeting occurs with the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee since JUMP also involves them.

10. Reminder: Next Graduate Council Meeting - Friday, February 16, 2024 in SSB 201 @ 2:00p.m.

11. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 3:42 p.m.

/srk