

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

**Friday / April 18, 2025
2:00 p.m. in SSB 201**

Members Present: Maria Pour, COE
Nicholas Loyd, COE
Wafa Orman, COB*
Sophia Marinova, COB
Xiaotong Li, COB
Jodi Price, CAHS*
Dylan Baun, CAHS
Lisa Vangsness, CAHS
Ryan Weber, CAHS
Lingze Duan, COS*
Larry Carey, COS
Haihong Che, COS
Seyed Sadeghi, COS
Yeow Chye Ng, CON*
Nilsa Black-Mead, CON
Lenora Smith, CON
Tracy Lakin, CON
Jeremy Elliott, COEd*
Amanda Aguilar, COEd
Laura Senn, COEd
Jon Hakkila, Chair*
David Moore, Library*
Amy Smith, Registrar*

Members Absent: Mike Anderson, COE*
Keith Hollingsworth, COE
Suzanne Simpson, OIREA*

Guests: Dave Puleo, Provost
Janice Burrows, COS
Sarah Dyess, COEd
Misty McFadden, OIREA
Susan Knight, Graduate School
Simone Frazier, Graduate School
Michelle Massey, Graduate School

**Non-Voting Member*

1. Roll Call

A record of attendance was recorded as noted above. Dr. Hakkila also acknowledged and thanked those members whose two-year terms ended with this meeting.

2. Approval of the Agenda

Motion was made by Dr. Dylan Baun 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 March 28, 2025

Motion was made by Dr. Lenora Smith to approve the minutes of the meeting of March 28, 2025. Motion was seconded by Dr. Nilsa Black-Mead. Motion carried.

4. Announcement(s)

a. Recent Graduate School Event(s)

N/A

b. Upcoming Graduate School Event(s)

N/A

OLD BUSINESS

5. Student Advancement to Doctoral Candidacy

Dr. Hakkila suggested two possible proposals in student advancement to doctoral candidacy: (1) Keep 799 and tag it as being 799 pre-qualifier and 799 post-qualifier; (2) Departments can decide on their research course, which would be favored since it could be controlled by the department. He said the drawbacks with regards to international students that were not discussed are that international students must have a minimum of 9 credit hours to be full time and those courses have to be on their programs of study. Dr. Hakkila stated he felt very uncomfortable with 799 being on the programs of study when students have not passed their qualifying exam to indicate they can take 799; it would actually be better for students to take something other than 799, such as a research course. Either way, the departments will have to place a limit on the number of credit hours they will allow and maybe the Graduate School will also have to put some limit on it.

Dr. Hakkila then asked Provost Puleo for his thoughts who posed the question and answer, "What is the name of the title of the course? Dissertation." He continued by saying that during their first years, students will not be working on their dissertation. At our sister institutions and other institutions across the country, there is a progression to candidacy. Then occurrence of when students enter into candidacy is a big deal in some universities, because then they are 100 percent research. Again, referencing our sister institutions, they have something called non-dissertation research, so it doesn't mean there cannot be a research course, but are they not really doing their dissertation project in their first semester because that project is supposed to be their creation – their original contribution. And if they come from a bachelor's or master's into their doctoral program, did they really have that project conceived? So they can do some research, they can take some courses, but it should be capped because they are supposed to have a certain number of credits of coursework, then the qualifying exam, and then a certain number of dissertation credits. So it should be—hurry up and get to your qualifying exam, enter into candidacy, and then crush your research to finish.

Dr. Puleo stated that if departments want to have a research course, it should not be dissertation credits starting during the first semester. Dissertations are post-qualifying. Dr. Puleo said he had been talking with Dr. Rhonda Gaede about this and she questioned how departments would get all those courses approved. He explained that, in his past, they made a conversion from the way they did post qualifying residency to a continuous enrollment, and every doctoral program they had on campus was assigned an "xxx767" so, administratively, we created these courses (using a course number that did not conflict with courses already being used). So, Dr. Puleo proposed that if departments wanted to do that he would see that the course is created if you want to have a research course that is pre-qualifying.

Dr. Puleo reiterated that 18 credit hours are supposed to be post-qualifying and that students do not have to be enrolled in a research course in order to conduct research, since graduate programs are structured with an understanding that students will need time to conduct their research and, therefore, time has already been factored in for that. He said having a non-dissertation research course does not mean that what students do doesn't count toward the dissertation – only that it doesn't replace or count toward the post-qualifying dissertation credits.

In clarifying a question from Dr. Pour, both Dr. Hakkila and Dr. Puleo restated that students should not take 799 credits until they have passed the qualifying exam. Dr. Puleo gave the example that in times past at one of his previous institutions, he didn't believe there was even a research course on the books. He said students just did the research because that's what they have to do to get their degree. He continued by saying that the idea is to get the coursework done, do all the preliminary stuff and literature search, and proceed to the qualifying exam. He questioned why we would want students to delay their qualifying exam when the goal should be for them to pass the qualifying exam (within two to three years), so they can enter the post-qualifying residency time, do their research full-time, and keep moving forward and being productive. He further explained to those who were concerned about the pre-qualifying coursework "counting" that departments can set the program requirements according to what the program wants the student to accomplish (the way you earn your PhD), which doesn't have to be credit-bearing or tied to a course; it just has to be tied to the program requirements, a portion of which are course-based.

Dr. Loyd asked: If a student takes 798 pre-qualifying exam, does that count toward coursework credits? Dr. Puleo said, yes, and as Jon alluded to, the non-dissertation research credits can count toward the pre-qualifying coursework; the key is to set a cap on those hours because we don't want most of the credit hours to be research hours. Dr. Puleo said he would support a university ceiling on the percentage of those non-dissertation research credits that would count toward the pre-qualifying coursework. He said departments/programs could lower that ceiling but could not go beyond the University maximum; faculty would have a say as to what that cap is, but a lot of universities set that cap percentage at approximately the ten percent range. Dr. Puleo shared his thoughts that committees need to meet every year, and our students need to be evaluated, have documented annual evaluations, and receive feedback. The idea is to have an efficient time-to-degree process so that our students finish as quickly as possible and go out and be successful, because they are the best reflection of what we do at the University; their success is key.

Dr. Loyd also asked about taking 798 and the continuous enrollment requirement of our part-time students. Dr. Puleo responded that he thought we do need to give some additional consideration to part-time students. He said that a big focus of continuous enrollment is post-qualifying, so we need to figure out early where these students are in their progress and we need to be sensitive to how we manage both master's and doctoral part-time students. Dr. Loyd said he doesn't want part-time students to delay their qualifying exam just because it's not a part of the continuous enrollment process. Dr. Puleo agreed but said that's where the milestones and requirements that the departments establish become really important.

Dr. Duan asked: What if students need more time to get ready for the qualifying exam? Dr. Puleo confirmed that UAB allows 16 of their 48 hours (one-third) of pre-qualifying credit, so someone coming in with a bachelor's degree would have 48 + 24, so they allow one-third of their pre-qualifying coursework to be their non-dissertation research credits. But if somebody needs more time, that just means they would accumulate some extra non-dissertation research credits, so the credits will be on the transcript but they just won't count.

Dr. Hakkila explained that the potential problem is that if a student goes over on those courses; an international student or one who has federal financial aid can only take courses that count toward their program of study. Dr. Duan then asked how they would accommodate an international student if they do have to go over? Dr. Hakkila responded that the flip side of that is that we have to be following students and reporting to the government that they are making progress toward their degree. So if a student just

keeps spinning their wheels, then that is going to hurt them eventually. Dr. Puleo turned the question back, asking why are the students not making progress? Why are they not ready? He said he understands that's an open question but the government could ask those questions. Further, he said that if we have a nicely structured program, get the advisor set, committee set, get the program of study set, we are regularly evaluating our students and providing feedback, then students need to be making satisfactory academic progress or they should not continue any longer. He explained that he was not discounting that students will run into obstacles but said we need a process, and that the point is that dissertation credit hours are intended to be post-qualifying and research can be done during any free time the student has. He stated that research is a mindset; it's not like the student should have to receive credit to be able to do their research and proposal to make progress, because that's the way they get their degree.

The question was asked about a leave policy for graduate students, but Dr. Hakkila explained that would be difficult to administer until a formal policy is in place, because right now students can just leave and we can't do anything keep them from leaving.

Dr. Puleo returned to the subject of tracking student progress, saying that we need to have a standardized evaluation process via a Quali form that will allow faculty to facilitate student evaluations, track the evaluations, notify everyone involved, and anything extra that programs want to build in because of the potential unique characteristics of their programs. This documentation would be provided to the students in order to hold them accountable for meeting expectations so that we know early if a student is off track.

Dr. Hakkila made the appeal that we create a policy that helps students progress better and create a structure that makes it easier to perform evaluations. He said we don't want the procedure to drive the policy; we need to have a policy by which we can work with departments to develop procedures that will work within the policy. The suggestion to come up with these research/pre-dissertation courses is meant to be a way to help faculty accomplish what you say you need to accomplish without getting rid of the definition of a qualifying exam and the purpose of candidacy.

Dr. Carey said he thought that allowing some advanced research 798 (or whatever departments want to call it) or some percentage of credit hours prior to the qualifying exam and candidacy is wise in that it provides another means of formal feedback on research that is preparing them for their dissertation research. Dr. Puleo responded that he supported having a pre-qualifying course; he just disagrees with it being dissertation credits straight up. Dr. Hakkila added that departments would have to agree that those hours would count in lieu of some of the other coursework; either that or the degree program would have to be made longer.

The conversation then shifted to the next topic.

6. Master's and Bachelor's Entry Points into Doctoral Programs

Dr. Loyd stated that part-time students often bring in 30 hours of master's credits.

Dr. Hakkila introduced that another issue for discussion this next year is each of our programs need to have a different entry point whether for a bachelor's or master's. Doing so would eliminate whether courses expire, count, or count as something else, etc. Dr. Puleo said that in his 31 years in higher education, he has never heard of transferring in credits as a block toward a master's degree and that earning a degree somewhere else and then transferring in credits is crazy because they are from another institution; having a master's entry point is a way to avoid that confusion. UAB allows 21 transfer credits for a master's degree. However, Dr. Puleo stated, he would 100 percent support needing a bachelor's entry point and a master's entry point and putting an end to dealing with the transferring of credits, expired courses, validation of courses, etc.

Dr. Hakkila added that after spending the last few years from all different angles working on these issues, he felt that there are fixes that will solve 90 percent of the problems we are experiencing right now. He proposed that we implement the candidacy solution now and we wait until the next academic year to

publish it in the catalog to give departments one year to figure out how their programs would use the courses; it would also give us time to talk about what the ceiling limit should be and allow us to move forward. Then, he said, next year we could also talk about the entry points for bachelor's and master's degrees.

Dr. Puleo added two comments: (1) We should have a conversation next year about summer enrollments; he explained that he is not a fan of required summer enrollments, but there is a way to consider a student full-time and not have to attend summer, and (2) He offered, again, for departments to determine what the ceiling number would be so we could administratively create the pre-qualifier research course that doesn't impose on any of your other courses. He said he was relatively sure that we could create this and block those courses rather expediently.

Dr. Hakkila stated that this becomes a reaffirmation issue but that SACSCOC is always happy if we can show that we are working on a solution for the next academic year in order to satisfy their requirements.

Dr. Puleo reiterated that we want students to be doing research during the summer and that he wasn't sure what the Mathematics Department is trying to accomplish by doing whatever they are doing. He said that any VISA issues could be discussed with International Services but that those were not a SACSCOC compliance issue.

Dr. Hakkila asked for the opinions of Michelle Massey, Simone Frazier, and Amy Smith. Ms. Frazier said she thought it makes the most sense for students to register for 799 this summer and to move forward with the discussions during the next academic year. Amy Smith agreed.

Dr. Carey asked for confirmation that what is being said was that a student can be a graduate assistant during the summer but not be enrolled for six credit hours; Dr. Hakkila confirmed that was certainly a possibility, but we would need to evaluate the repercussions and take some time to review it.

Dr. Hakkila explained that there was a motion on the table to proceed with the candidacy requirement; that the definition and expectation is that 799 follows candidacy; that programs will have time to discuss it; and that we will work to add the ceiling limits. Lastly, he said, all of these things would be finalized during the next academic year. He explained that doing these things would provide us with some action items to report to SACSCOC in the event they asked.

Dr. Larry Carey seconded Dr. Hakkila's motion.

At this point, Dr. Puleo left the meeting; he thanked Graduate Council members for what they do, said that he hoped to see them at the upcoming commencement, and wished everyone a really good summer.

NEW BUSINESS

7. Curriculum Items

- a. COB: ACC 541 – Advanced Government Contract Accounting (course change: inactivate) – **Approved**
- b. COE: CERT CBSE – Cybersecurity Certificate (program change: inactivate) – **Approved**
- c. COE: CERT IACP – Cybersecurity Studies Certificate (program change: inactivate) – **Approved**
- d. COE: CERT SWEE – Software Engineering Certificate (program change: inactivate) – **Approved**
- e. COE: MOPT – Optics & Photonics Technology Concentration (concentration change: inactivate) – **Approved**
- f. COE: OPTe – Opto-Electronics Concentration (concentration change: inactivate) – **Approved**
- g. CAHS: MUE 527 – Teaching General Music (course change: inactivate) – **Approved**
- h. CAHS: MUX 590 – UAH Concert Choir (course change: inactivate) – **Approved**
- i. CAHS: MUX 591 – UAH Chamber Choir (course change: inactivate) – **Approved**
- j. CAHS: MUX 599 – UAH Wind Ensemble (course change: inactivate) – **Approved**
- k. CAHS: PSC 612 – Budgetary Process (course change: inactivate) – **Approved**
- l. COE: EE 718 – Microwave Techniques (course change: reactivate) – **Approved**

- m. COE: ISE 638 – Engineering Reliability (*course change: add pre-requisite*) – **Approved**
- n. COE: MSSE CPE – Computer Engineering (*program change: delivery method, focus area title, structure*) – **Approved**
- o. COS: CHEP – Entrepreneurial Chemistry Concentration (*concentration change: language, structure*) – **Approved**
- p. COS: CHEX – Executive Chemistry Concentration (*concentration change: language*) – **Approved**
- q. COS: MATS – Atmospheric Science Concentration (*concentration change: language*) – **Approved**
- r. COS: MESS – Earth Systems Science Concentration (*concentration change: language, structure*) – **Approved**
- s. COS: MS AES – Atmospheric & Earth Science (*program change: language, structure*) – **Approved**
- t. COS: MS CBSS – Cybersecurity (*program change: add learning outcomes, structure*) – **Approved**
- u. COS: PHD ATS – Atmospheric Science PhD (*program change: language*) – **Approved**
- v. CON: NEDU – Nursing Education Concentration (*concentration change: description, structure*) – **Approved**
- w. CON: NUR 500 – Special Topics (*course change: credit hours*) – **Approved**
- x. CON: NUR 640 – Curriculum Development for Nurse Educators (*course change: title, description*) – **Approved**
- y. CON: NUR 641 – Best Practices in Teaching, Learning, & Assessment (*course change: title, description*) – **Approved**
- z. CON: NUR 642 – Evaluating Learning Outcomes: Methods & Apps (*course change: title, description*) – **Approved**
- aa. CON: NUR 643 – Professional Roles & Comps for Nurse Educators (*course change: title, description*) – **Approved**
- bb. CON: NUR 644 – Practicum in Teaching (*course change: description*) – **Approved**
- cc. CON: NUR 646 – Instructional Technology in Nursing Education (*course change: description*) – **Approved**
- dd. CON: NUR 652 – Clinical Practicum for Nurse Educators (*course change: add description*) – **Approved**
- ee. CON: NUR 700 – Statistics for Translational Research in Healthcare (*course change: title, description, learning outcomes*) – **Approved**
- ff. CON: NUS 774 – Measurement in Research (*course change: learning outcomes*) – **Approved**
- gg. CON: NUR 608 – Advanced Pathophysiology & Pharmacology for Nurse Educators (*new course*) – **Approved**
- hh. COEd: ED 541 – Constructing Mathematical Knowledge through Social Interactions (*new course*) – **Approved**
- ii. COEd: ED 542 – Planning Mathematics Instruction that Engages All Learners (*new course*) – **Approved**
- jj. COB: IS 555 – Cyber Fraud Management (*new course*) – **Approved**
- kk. COS: MA 530 – Algebra for Secondary Teachers (*new course*) – **Approved, pending (1) Dr. Hakkila to reword pre-requisites section for better clarity, and (2) Registrar to change course to “cross-listed” and add syllabi to proposal for MA 530/MA 430.**

8. Graduate Faculty Nominations – For Membership Consideration

- a. CON: ⁰⁹³⁸ Uptagrafft, Brooke – MD/Family Medicine (*DNP Mentor*) – **Approved**
- b. COS: ¹⁰⁰⁰ Cassilly, Chelsi – PhD/Microbiology (*request to serve on supervisory committee*) – **Approved**
- c. CON: ¹⁰⁰³ Redwine, Kim – DNP (*DNP Mentor*) – **Approved**
- d. CON: ⁰⁹⁷¹ Pascal, Shlomo – MD/Child, Adult, & Geriatric Psych Eating Disorders (*DNP Mentor*) – **Approved**
- e. CAHS: ¹⁰⁰⁷ Krenn, Daniel – PhD/Industrial & Organizational Psychology (*request to teach graduate course [PY 502]; request to serve on supervisory committee*) – **Approved**
- f. COB: ¹⁰⁰¹ Jones, Benjamin – PhD/Business Management, Strategy, & Innovation (*request to teach graduate courses [IS 512, IS 601, IS 691] based on master’s and experience in discipline or related field*) – **Approved**

9. For the Good of the Order

N/A

10. Reminder: Next Graduate Council Meeting – September 19, 2025

11. Adjourn – The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:20 p.m.

/srk