The University of Kansas  
College of Liberal Arts & Sciences  
COMMITTEE ON GRADUATE STUDIES  

MINUTES  
NOVEMBER 5, 2009, 11:00AM  
STRONG HALL – ROOM 210  

Members Present: Jeannette Blackmar, Bart Dean, Dale Dorsey, Boone Hopkins, Brian Laird, William Lindsey, Gwen Macpherson, Michael Moody, Ed Morris, Lisa Rausch, Kees Van der Veen, Gina Westergard  
Also Present: Ray Hummert (Public Administration), Acting Associate Dean Jim Mielke, Executive Assistant Dean Rebecca Peterson, Lea Smith (COGA), Linda Stone-Ferrier (History of Art), Savanna Trent (COGA)  

The meeting was called to order by Brian Laird at 11:00 AM.  

Minutes  

The committee approved the Minutes of October 22, 2009, as written.  

Report of the Policies, Procedures and Awards Subcommittee  
Presented by Ed Morris, Chair  

- Presentation of new “grading” language  

Grading  
The +/- grading system is used in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences; the plus or minus describes intermediate levels of performance between a maximum of A and a minimum of F. Intermediate grades represented by plus or minus are calculated as 0.3 units above or below the corresponding letter grade. The Credit/No Credit system is not used for graduate courses in the College. The P/NP grading system is only available in courses where a student is graded on a project or specific assignment that cannot be completed in one semester (e.g., courses involving public scholarship, service-learning, internship, practicum, etc.); graduate courses seeking this grade menu must receive prior approval from the College such that this grade option is noted in the course description.  

Courses that are often repeated over multiple semesters (e.g., research, thesis, dissertation, etc.) while students assemble and analyze data, review literature in their fields of study, or write a graduate thesis or dissertation will use either the A-F or S/U grading systems. For each semester of enrollment in these courses, students are required to devise a plan of study with the faculty member supervising the course and discuss their progress with their instructor/mentor periodically throughout the semester such that s/he can assign a grade for work completed in that semester only; the grade awarded for the examination of a written thesis or dissertation should only be assigned to the relevant enrolled hours in the semester in which the examination takes place. If a student is not in contact with his or her mentor during the semester s/he is enrolled in this course, and/or does not meet the specifications of the plan of study made in collaboration with the faculty member supervising these hours, the student will be given a failing grade and subsequently will not receive credit for this course.  

An Incomplete (I) grade may be used in any course to temporarily represent that a student has been unable to complete a portion of the required coursework in a given semester due to circumstances beyond his or her control. Incomplete work must be finished and a permanent grade assigned before
a student is eligible to take oral comprehensive exams.

All other grading policies for students enrolled in CLAS graduate courses are outlined in Article II of the University Senate Rules and Regulations (https://documents.ku.edu/policies/governance/USRR.htm).

Probation and Dismissal Guidelines. To be in good standing, a student must maintain a 3.0 cumulative grade-point average; if the grade-point average falls below 3.0, the department is notified that the student should be placed on probation. This action is followed by a letter to the student confirming the probation and explaining the student’s options.

Usually a student is placed on probation for one academic semester. If the cumulative grade-point average has not risen to 3.0 at this point, the student can either be dismissed or be allowed to continue on probation, depending on the department’s decision. If a student has a dangerously low grade-point average and is in jeopardy of never graduating, the department must write a letter explaining why the student should be allowed to continue.

A graduate student can be dismissed upon recommendation of the student’s department. Academic dismissal should occur before a semester begins; but if a student is dismissed during the semester, the dismissal is effective only at the end of the semester in which the department gives notification of dismissal.

The student is notified of dismissal. Usually a graduate student is dismissed because of a low grade-point average; however, failure of examinations or failure to make satisfactory progress toward the degree are also cause for dismissal.

If a department dismisses a student, he or she cannot be readmitted as a graduate student in any department in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

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- Presentation of courses that may be affected by new and proposed policies

1. PUAD 831, Professor Raymond Hummert
   Professor Hummert explained that students attend a variety of workshops to earn “credits” within the course. Students need 18 credits to complete the course. Full-time students usually finish in a reasonable period of time. However, part-time students generally take longer to meet the 18 credit requirement. An “Incomplete” grade could remain for several semesters until the student completed the course. A new advising practice has encouraged part-time students to enroll in the course during the semester they actually plan to finish the final credits, so a grade can be assigned at the conclusion of that semester.

2. HA 999, Professor Linda Stone-Ferrier
   Professor Stone-Ferrier explained that her department has been interested in shortening their students’ time to degree, and they feel that providing an A-F grading system for their dissertation hours (HA 999) increases student-mentor engagement and accelerates degree completion. While one drawback of using A-F grade menus could be grade inflation, but in her experience, that does not seem to be occurring in recent years. The use of “P” grades may have helped reflect a more accurate GPA in the past, but it did not seem to motivate students to reduce their time-to-degree. She reported a new advising practice which has been very effective. Students may not enroll in HA 999 until a “contract” is agreed upon between the student and his/her advisor. The “contract” is simply a collaborative agreement which outlines the expectations of the semester. It provides real accountability and deadlines to avoid the “floating” behavior of students enrolling in several years of dissertation credits. Professor Stone-Ferrier made it clear that the A-F grading scale is necessary for the contract to work, and she believes that the S/U grading system would not be as effective for dissertation hours.

Note: See Addendum A
3. MUSE 799, Professor Marjorie Swann

Professor Swann was unable to attend the meeting, so Dean Peterson provided limited information on the MUSE 799 course. In her understanding, six credits of this course are required for the MUSE degree. The program has allowed these credits to be spread over time in the program (e.g., enrolling in two credits each semester for three semesters) to reflect the time a student spends on this course over a multi-semester period, as well as to enable the student more time to finance the high number of course credits required. An “Incomplete” grade has been used as the “placeholder” until the student’s final report for the course could be fully evaluated. The grading policies under review may have an impact on the grading practices of this course.

- Discussion

Concerns were presented on the language in the grading policy. The first sentence of the second paragraph includes the phrase, “…will use either the A-F or S/U grading systems.” This may not allow enough flexibility for departments and faculty members to use P/NP grades with certain courses (e.g. dissertation, thesis, research), as is the practice in some graduate programs today. The unique feature of P/NP is that the grade may be changed after the work is complete (Note: This grading system, and the rules governing it, are still under review by AP&P). Some graduate programs may want to have a final thesis or dissertation grade given retroactively to all hours in which the student labored on this work. Yet, the presentation of how dissertation credits are evaluated in the Department of History of Art was compelling, and some members thought it might be important to evaluate a student’s research plan and completion each semester rather than to allow one final grade to count for semesters in which little to no work was completed. Additionally, the current language does not include an adequate phrase to describe the work of students from the School of the Arts. They do not necessarily “analyze data” or “write a thesis.” Lastly, the sentence stating, “…this grade option is noted in the course description,” is a concern because grading options are rarely included in the course description. The Subcommittee will take all of this input from the full committee under advisement to revise the language further.

- Presentation of post-comprehensive enrollment deliberations to date

Ed Morris, Jeannette Blackmar, and Boone Hopkins recently met with different individuals to discuss the impact that post-comprehensive enrollment may have on students, such as financial aid implications. They each provided a report of their findings, and will initiate follow-up discussions as needed.

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Proposed Changes in Graduate Education Policies and Procedures

Goals:

1. To promote further graduate student engagement with faculty and graduate mentors
2. To increase the number of external sources that fund graduate student work
3. To increase graduate program completion rates
4. To decrease graduate program time to degree
5. To report accurately the time students and faculty commit to post-candidacy work
6. To reduce the administrative time spent monitoring post-comprehensive requirements

Means for achieving these goals:
1. Encourage and provide flexibility to graduate programs for structuring their pre- and post-candidacy hours to maximize their students’ early and continued engagement in research with faculty and graduate mentors.

2. Set aside tuition funds for the competitive awarding and cost-sharing of external funds for graduate student work in order to create incentives (e.g., benefits and tuition assistance) for graduate students to write grants and seek pre-doctoral fellowships.

3. Create a tuition structure in which pre-candidacy tuition remains linear up to nine credit hours (i.e., full-time enrollment), while post-candidacy tuition is a greatly reduced flat fee for full-time enrollment (but a fee greater than that required for one credit hour). This would eliminate the five-month rule (i.e., the requirement that students wait five months between their comprehensive, qualifying, or portfolio exam and their doctoral exams) and the 18-hour requirement before students may reduce their enrollments to one credit hour (along with applying hours taken during the semester the exams are passed to count toward the 18 hours).

4a. Encourage graduate programs to advance students to successful Ph.D. candidacy with policies and procedures that promote students’ preparation for candidacy before undertaking a significant portion of their dissertation research (and thus reduce their pre-candidacy tuition).

4b. Encourage graduate programs to advance students to the successful completion of their Ph.D. degrees with policies and procedures that minimize the time they spend spent completing them (and thus reduce their years of post-candidacy tuition).

5. Create a model that produces more accurate information gathering and statistics regarding how post-candidacy students spend their time completing their degrees (e.g., how much time students and faculty commit to post-candidacy work).

6. Create a model that allows more efficient monitoring of post-comprehensive requirements (e.g., by requiring no minimum number of post-candidacy credit hours students to graduate, administrative time currently spent counting these hours would be eliminated or dramatically reduced).

These goals and the means for achieving them will be completed with the following specific action:

Create a University Graduate Task Force comprised of stakeholders in academic departments, financial aid, grants and fellowships, international programs, human resources, and University administration (i.e., Registrar, Payroll, Graduate Studies) to create a comprehensive model to present to the Board of Regents.

We hope this model can accomplish the following:

1. Create a revenue neutral tuition structure for the University

2. Stipulate that full-time (year-round) enrollment for graduate students is nine hours each Fall and Spring

3. Ensure that all stakeholders recognize students as full-time (year round) with Fall/Spring (but not summer) enrollment

4. Require summer enrollment only for students who are taking their qualifying exams or completing their degrees that summer

5. Set a reduced tuition for post-candidacy enrollment that still encourages students to finish their degrees

6. Create a fund administered by Research and Graduate Studies for cost-sharing with departments to provide graduate students who garner outside funding with GTA/GRA benefits.
• Discussion

Since this was a preliminary report, discussion from the full committee was limited. There was a general consensus that the Subcommittee members were on the right track, and the full committee looks forward to hearing more from their information gathering at a future meeting.

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Dean’s charge on cross listing courses

One of the Dean's charges to the CGS is as follows: "Determine best practices or procedures for the College Office of Graduate Affairs receiving curricular changes and for the academic units proposing new courses (including cross-listings of existing courses) that may include content that would be of interest or of concern to another academic unit at the university."

Gwen Macpherson reported for the Curricular Changes Subcommittee regarding discussions on this charge to date. She posed questions on how departments receive funding based on credit hours from cross-listed courses and requested an explanation of the rationale behind encouraging departments to cross-list courses.

Dean Rebecca Peterson provided clarification on what this Dean’s charge is aimed to address. Currently, there are no clear guidelines for the subcommittee members, departments, or COGA staff to effectively collect and evaluate consultation regarding cross-listing courses. For example, curricular change forms were presented at the final CGS meeting of Spring 2009 for GINS 801 and GEOG 801. To date, the courses have not been forwarded to CAC due to intermittent communication among those involved. The subcommittee is encouraged to develop a set of practices to best streamline the process of reviewing cross-list requests.

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The meeting was adjourned by Brian Laird at 12:30 PM.

Upcoming Meetings

The next meeting of the Committee on Graduate Studies is Thursday, November 19, 2009, 11:00 AM, 210 Strong Hall

Respectfully submitted by Savanna Trent, COGA

Addendum A:
Contract for Fall 2007 Dissertation Hours

Advisor: Dr. Charles Eldridge

Dear Dr. Eldridge,

Per our conversation this morning, below is an outline for earning twelve dissertation hours in the 2007 Fall semester.

First half of the semester:

Upon successful completion of my comprehensive exams (September 10th), I will prepare my dissertation proposal on Thomas Hicks. This will include chapter topics with a short paragraph description. I will submit a copy to you by October 8th. It will be corrected, revised and resubmitted to you by October 12th for discussion at the October 19th faculty meeting.

Second half of the semester:

I will update the Hicks painting catalogue and submit it for your approval.

I will have (at least) one chapter outline for your approval.

I will also investigate and submit potential grant applications for Hicks archival research.

Advisor Signature: S.24.-07

Student Signature: 
Dissertation Contract:

Letter grades will be based upon a contract to be developed in advance of each semester between the student and the advisor. These agreements will indicate the progress the student expects to make during the term. Specific plans for each student will vary. For example, one might propose to outline the text; another to draft a chapter; or, complete archival research in X; or, complete and submit the dissertation proposal, etc. These contracts should be developed in concert with the advisor, i.e., the student proposes a reasonable amount of work to be accomplished, and the advisor concurs or suggests alternatives. With agreement reached between student and advisor, the student will then be expected to complete the agreed upon work and, at the end of the semester, will be graded accordingly.

In grading each advisor will use his or her own judgment. Satisfactory progress as outlined in the contract should be indicated by a grade of A; less satisfactory progress by a grade of B; unsatisfactory progress by a grade of C in the first instance, D in the second consecutive instance, and F in the third consecutive instance. The grade of F on dissertation hours will result in the student's status in the graduate program being reviewed by the graduate faculty.