

## **Graduate Academic and Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes for Monday, March 28, 2011**

Voting members present: Ken Abramowicz (chair), Donie Bret-Harte (phone), Lara Dehn, Regine Hock, Orion Lawlor, Anupma Prakash, Sue Renes, Jen Schmidt

Nonvoting members present: Larry Duffy, Anita Hughes, Karen Jensen, Libby Eddy  
Guest: Jayne Harvie (taking notes)

1. The agenda was adopted as distributed.
2. Meeting minutes for February 28 were adopted without modifications.
3. Discussion Items
  - A. Graduate School objectives and indicators

Objective: Enable master's and Ph.D. students to master a subject area or advance knowledge.

Indicators:

1. Employment or continuing education placement of recent master's and employment placement of Ph.D. graduates report in the national Survey of Earned Doctorate and by units.
2. Number of independently reviewed graduate student research and creative products (including articles and other publications, and juried shows and performances). This indicator also appears in the Discover theme.
3. List of successfully defended projects or thesis.

Larry Duffy explained the use of these indicators for Accreditation review under the "Educate" and "Discover" themes. The indicators above are being discussed and he asked that folks get the word out. Discussion followed about how the data for the indicators will be tracked. The Graduate School collects some data.

B. Stacked courses. Request for volunteer(s) to work with member(s) of Curricular Affairs Committee on joint project to study stacked courses and develop proposed guidelines for stacked courses.

Orion Lawlor and Lara Dehn volunteered to work with Curricular Affairs to gather more input on stacked courses from students and faculty. Orion would like to see clear guidelines developed about what is involved in stacking a course, and what is expected at the undergrad and graduate levels of a stacked course.

4. Proposed motions
  - A. Academic dismissal of graduate students (motion attached)

Members agreed the specifics of the academic dismissal policy should be spelled out. Regine noted that the time period on item c. needs to be clarified. Add language “in graduate study plan” to that item.

Larry Duffy will incorporate the revisions into the language of the proposed motion and will bring it back to the committee.

#### B. F-1 Students (Regine Hock’s motion, attached)

Larry Duffy noted that the Department of Labor sets the rules and that it’s a Homeland Security issue. Carol Holtz at the Office of International Programs enforces it here on campus. (He suggests a resolution rather than a motion on this issue.)

Discussion took place about distinguishing between the defense of a thesis and what constitutes completing a degree. The rule is being interpreted as though the defense of a thesis completes the degree, but this is not how faculty interpret it. There has to be sign-off by faculty that a student has finished a degree program; which takes place after a thesis is defended.

Anupma noted that students are stalling their theses defense to extend their time because of how OIP is interpreting what constitutes finishing their degree program.

Carol Holtz will be invited to a future meeting. Regine would like to be present for that meeting, and it will be scheduled when she’s able to attend.

5. Proposals passed since the last meeting were noted.

6. Review of new proposals:

#99-GCCh – BIOL F675 / F475 was discussed. There was consensus that the course is undergraduate level and lacks the rigor for graduate level. Anupma noted that there is not definitive guidance to follow on what constitutes graduate level in a stacked course. Regine noted that having two separate syllabi helps. Anupma suggested asking the instructor for graduate level learning outcomes. Lara suggested that public presentations be included for the graduate level (as opposed to just more reading or finding a greater number of papers). The committee is looking for quality of graduate level learning, not merely quantity.

#11-Trial – GEOG F694 / F494 (Climate Change Processes): Jen noted that it’s an undergraduate capstone course for the B.S. degree. It meets with the ATM course – what if a student enrolls for both? Confusing status of GEOG F412 course was noted. The main problem of note is that it’s supposed to be a core course for a degree program; therefore, how can it have NO prerequisites?

Anupma noted the difficulty of judging this course without the second half that’s supposed to follow it. Ken is going to follow up with instructor.

The next meeting is in two weeks, on April 11 (same time and location). Ken asked for members to be prepared for discussion of the new Education courses (new master’s concentration in instructional technology).

Suggested addition to the UAF Catalog under ACADEMIC DISMISSAL (current catalog definition) page 48 of the 2010-11 catalog:

*Graduate students* -If recommended by the department chair, the graduate advisory committee, and the dean of the college or school, and approved by the Dean of the Graduate School, a student will be dismissed because of unsatisfactory performance. Unsatisfactory performance is deemed as one or more of the following:

- a. Exceeding maximum time limit for degree.
- b. Not being registered at UAF for a minimum 6 credits per year unless on approved leave of absence.
- c. Having less than 3.0 cumulative GPA on courses taken since admission to graduate school.
- d. Being on probationary status for more than two consecutive semesters.
- e. Violating the Student Code of Conduct.
- f. Lacking progress as judged by the advisory committee and documented on the student's annual report.
- g. Having substantive inaccuracies in the student's application for admission.

If the student does not have a graduate advisory committee, dismissal can occur upon the recommendation of the department chair and the dean of the college or school, with approval by the Dean of the Graduate School.

***PROPOSED ADDITION TO THE ABOVE:***

The consequences of being Academically dismissed from your graduate program are significant and may include all of the following ramifications. Your status will be changed from being a graduate degree-seeking student to a non-degree student. Any classes you may have pre-registered for will be dropped. You will have a printable notation on your transcript that will state you were "Academically Dismissed from Degree Program." You will not be eligible to receive any teaching or research assistantships or other graduate fellowships. Opportunities to receive financial aid will be severely limited.

**Motion to change the international graduate student program completion date so that it matches the program completion date applied to US citizens**

**Motivation and background**

According to United States immigration rules students in F-1 status have to leave the country within 2 months of the expiration of their visa, or the end date of their graduate program, whichever comes first. Currently UAF considers students in F-1 status to have completed their graduate program 10 days after the date of their defense, whereas the graduate program for non-foreign students terminates at the end of the semester during which the students have fully met all UAF graduate school requirements which include signatures from all committee members, chair of department, and the dean.

It is common that students need several weeks or more to meet all graduate school requirements after the date of their thesis defense. In many cases, students are not given feedback on their submitted thesis from their committee members until the day of their defense. Apart from implementing the required corrections, some committee members may request an additional review of the thesis before it is sent to the chair of the department. Therefore, it is often unrealistic that all necessary signatures can be gathered within a 10-day period.

While recognizing the need to ensure students complete their degree in a timely manner, and in full compliance with USCIS guidelines, the 10-day time period is extremely short and adds considerably more stress to students at a time when they should focus on the completion of their degree. The current definition of completion date goes contrary to the general practice of a graduate thesis defense at UAF where committees may require substantial revisions to the thesis after the defense. Also, all graduate students should be treated the same regardless of their immigration status.

The short time period between thesis defense and program completion that is currently applied to international students has negative implications for these students. First, once the program has ended, the student can no longer be paid. This can be overcome by application for Optional Practical Training (OPT), however this requires a time- and resources consuming procedure including a substantial fee, and therefore adds another layer of bureaucracy for both the university and the student as well as additional costs and stress to the student during the very final stage of their thesis completion.

**Motion**

The graduate program completion date is defined as the end of the semester when the graduate student has fully met all UAF graduate school requirements. The definition applies to both US citizens and international graduate students.