

**Minutes  
Graduate Council  
October 23, 2008**

**Members Present:** Neslihan Alp, Boris Belinskiy, Hinsdale Bernard, Nicholas Boer, Tom Bugey, Lee Harris for Monte Coulter, Ahmed Eltom, John Freeman, Kristi Gibbs, Diane Halstead, George Helton, Gale Iles, Brian O’Leary, Mike Owens, Vicki Petzko, Cathie Smith, Joyce Smith

**Members Absent:** Roger Briley, David Edwards, Joey Shaw, Chris Smith, Greg Thibadoux, Li Yang

**Ex-officio Members Present:** Stephanie Bellar, Joe Dumas, Suzanne Elder (GSA representative), Yvonne Kilpatrick

**Ex-officio Members Absent:** Theresa Liedtka

**Guests Present:** Nancy Amberson, Linda Orth

**Summary of Actions**

**Approved changes to curriculum proposal guidelines (except requirement for addition and deletion of course prerequisites to be done with full proposals) presented by Graduate Curriculum Committee; vote was 16-0-1.**

**Referred potential catalog language change regarding TOEFL/IELTS requirements to Yvonne Kilpatrick, Nancy Amberson, and Joe Dumas for a recommendation to be brought back at a future meeting.**

**Requested programs to provide to Yvonne Kilpatrick, ASAP, any suggestions for additions/deletions to/from the full-time equivalent course list in the Graduate Catalog.**

**Tentatively scheduled an additional Graduate Council meeting for Thursday, November 20, in case there are additional curriculum proposals that are not acted on at the November 13 meeting.**

**Opening of the Meeting and Approval of the Minutes:**

Vicki Petzko called the meeting to order at 3:17 p.m. Brian O’Leary moved and Kristi Gibbs seconded approval of the minutes of the October 9, 2008 meeting. Some minor corrections were suggested by Graduate Council members and the minutes, with corrections, were approved by voice vote. Dr. Petzko then asked Kristi Gibbs for the report from the Graduate Curriculum Committee.

**Graduate Curriculum Committee:**

Kristi Gibbs reported several items to the Council on behalf of the Curriculum Committee. In particular,

- 1) The Curriculum Committee has passed one proposal (for a new course) on first reading, which will be brought forward to the full Graduate Council at the next meeting on November 13.
- 2) The THEC guidelines for new program proposals are on the Graduate School web site.

- 3) The Curriculum Committee was asked (by Associate Provost Dr. Jocelyn Sanders' office) to review and possibly revise the instructions for submitting graduate curriculum proposals. They have been looking at this issue and distributed a document to the Graduate Council members outlining proposed changes. The Graduate Council proceeded to discuss these proposed changes at some length:

The change proposed by Dr. Sanders that seems most problematic is the idea of requiring a full proposal (as opposed to just an information item) when a department wishes to add or delete prerequisites for a course within their own department. Other proposed changes, including moving to a full proposal for decreasing the number of credit hours for a course or shifting a course to variable credit status, were approved by the Curriculum Committee. The Committee also recommended adding "cross-listing an existing course" and "removing courses that have not been offered in three years" to the list of changes that could be processed as information items, and suggested adding these to the form along with information that should be included on the accompanying memorandum (a description of the change and the rationale for the change). The Committee further recommended that "significant modification to course content by the addition or removal of topics embodied in the original course proposal," "alteration of requirements for any program of study, concentration or certificate," and "changing the credit hours awarded for the course" be added to the inclusive description of actions requiring full proposals. Finally, the Committee recommended that proposal guidelines specify that "pre-reqs, co-reqs, credit hours, grading format & capstone identification" should be specified in curriculum proposals along with a "table listing old & new degree requirements" (for full proposals making changes to degree programs).

The bulk of the discussion of the Curriculum Committee report revolved around the remaining issue of requiring a full proposal to add or delete course prerequisites within the department. Dr. Petzko pointed out that, if enacted, this change would add workload to the Curriculum Committee. Dr. Bellar stated that it took her a while to "get" the need to do this; that she saw that it could be cumbersome, but also saw the need to review prerequisites at the program (macro) level as well as at the course (micro) level to avoid "creep" in the size of programs. Changing to a full proposal would add a level of review vs. an information item that would be presented to the Graduate Council as a *fait accompli*, which would go into practice. Where do things get stopped if they go beyond the bounds of what should be done with an information item? The College deans become the only stopper. The Graduate Council is the body charged with maintaining the quality of graduate programs and our Curriculum Committee is the place where we vet things and do our due diligence in a collegial way.

Discussion continued with Registrar Linda Orth engaging Graduate Council members about current and proposed practices. Kristi Gibbs indicated that part of the idea behind the proposed change is to bring our (graduate) policies more in line with the procedure that is followed for undergraduate curriculum changes; her committee looked at that procedure as part of its deliberations. Linda Orth opined that the same paperwork would have to be done whether the change was an information item or a full proposal; the only difference would be the level of scrutiny applied by the Graduate Council and, in particular, the Curriculum Committee. Mike Owens wondered aloud how this body would catch things when they are really the department's business. Brian O'Leary, George Helton, and Mike Owens all stated agreement with the thought that an extra layer of review would not add much to the process except bureaucracy. If a department insists that a given course does or does not need a given prerequisite, how would the Curriculum Committee, without discipline-specific knowledge, be justified in overruling them?

George Helton moved and Nesli Alp seconded a motion that we approve those items in the report that were already approved by the Curriculum Committee. (Not included, at this time, would be the

provisions requiring a full curriculum proposal for adding or deleting prerequisites.) Dr. Petzko stated that we could reconsider the prerequisites issue at a later date, and mentioned that she would ask Dr. Bellar to share our concerns with Dr. Sanders and ask the Associate Provost to join us at a future meeting to discuss them further. With this understood, the motion passed by a hand count of 16-0-1.

### **International Student English Requirements:**

With an apology to International Student Advisor Nancy Amberson for making her sit through the extended discussion of the previous topic, Dr. Petzko (without objection) moved to what had previously been listed as the fourth item on the meeting agenda (momentarily postponing the discussion of “full time equivalences”). This item, which had been discussed briefly at the previous meeting (leading to the invitation to Ms. Amberson), was the question of whether or not to require the TOEFL or IELTS for international students who have degrees from English-speaking schools. Nancy Amberson said that this was a question that she has had in the past, and it continues to come up. Up until about a year ago, the unwritten rule was that students who had graduated from U.S. universities within the previous two years would not be required to take the TOEFL; if they had graduated longer ago than that, they would be required to take the test. Since this policy was not written down, she and the director of the Graduate School stopped enforcing it. We are currently not requiring the TOEFL if the student has an undergraduate degree from a U.S. college or university – but the catalog language does not reflect this. It would be good to have catalog language that reflects actual practice – and to have that language listed not only in the “doctoral programs” section of the *Graduate Catalog*, but to have it apply to all programs.

Dr. Dumas raised the question of students who have degrees from schools in other English-speaking countries such as Britain, Canada, and Australia; should those students be exempt from the TOEFL as well? There might be a difference between merely having English as the language of instruction (e.g. at some schools in India) vs. living in a country where the predominant language is English (and so one is learning to use the language around the clock vs. only in the classroom). Other members of the Graduate Council raised additional questions such as: whether the TOEFL tested oral language proficiency or just written (Ms. Amberson stated that the IELTS requires oral language skills and that the TOEFL now has some speaking portions); whether individual programs can require language testing beyond what the *Graduate Catalog* specifies as a general rule (they can); and what was the cost of the TOEFL and whether students have to pay it (it is over \$100 and the students do have to pay for it, as well as SEVIS fees, etc.). Dr. Petzko asked Nancy Amberson, Yvonne Kilpatrick, and Joe Dumas to look at what other schools (especially other UT campuses) do, craft proposed language for the *Graduate Catalog*, and bring it back before the body at a future meeting for our consideration. They agreed to do this.

### **Full-Time Equivalences:**

Dr. Petzko now moved back to the (momentarily postponed) third agenda item: the discussion of full-time equivalent courses and whether there should be any additions to, or deletions from, the list currently published in the *Graduate Catalog*. The idea is that there are some courses (mostly thesis, capstone, research, and some internship courses) that are typically taken separately from regular courses – often because they place extra demands on a student’s time such that it would be an undue burden to take additional courses on top of the course in question. Therefore, students enrolled in these classes are automatically considered to be full-time graduate students even if they are not taking 9 hours. These courses are not designed as a way to allow students to skip along without taking a full load; but defining them accurately is very important because full-time enrollment is related to a myriad of other items including financial aid, student health insurance, student loan deferments, etc.

Yvonne Kilpatrick stated that Rexann Bumpus in Financial Aid will only go by what is in the catalog so it is important for us to get the list right, and (from the financial aid standpoint, at least) any changes would not take effect until next fall when the new catalog is published. So, we need to act in the near future if we want to make any changes for 2009-10 and beyond. Cathie Smith asked how this issue applies to summer terms and Yvonne Kilpatrick said that the several summer terms are all grouped together as one to determine whether a student is enrolled full-time during the summer.

Only one or two departments have thus far responded to Yvonne Kilpatrick about whether their listed FTE courses are correct or whether any changes are needed. The rest of us need to let her know. Linda Orth wants the list of full-time equivalent courses updated by the time we transmit Spring enrollment information. Ms. Kilpatrick stated that the list in the 08-09 catalog should be the list sent to THEC this year for consistency. Department representatives were asked to check with their faculty and transmit any desired changes to Yvonne Kilpatrick ASAP so that she can collect them into a list; she will bring the list forward to the Graduate Council at the next meeting so we can act on any changes in time to get them into next year's catalog. It was noted that 598 research courses are not all created equal and that some of them might be reasonable for full-time equivalence while others might not. Gale Iles asked about internships – can we look at those department by department, or must we classify them all as either full-time or not? Stephanie Bellar responded that they can be evaluated for each department and that it may be that not all internship/research courses should be listed as full-time equivalents.

#### **Other items:**

Vicki Petzko asked whether we were going to have all curriculum proposals ready by the November 13 meeting, or will we need to hold another Graduate Council meeting this semester? (The Council normally meets on the second and fourth Thursdays of each month; but this month the fourth Thursday, November 27, is Thanksgiving.) She posed the possibility that we might need to schedule another meeting before the end of the semester to finish up Curriculum Committee business, and suggested November 20 or December 4 as possibilities.

Yvonne Kilpatrick said that by early next week she can send Kristi Gibbs 4-5 more proposals for the Curriculum Committee to consider. Two or three others have issues yet to be resolved. Kristi Gibbs said that the Curriculum Committee could meet on November 6 (two weeks from this meeting) and bring some proposals forward at the November 13 meeting. However, it is possible that a few other proposals may not be ready at that time. It was noted that December 4 falls during final exam week, while November 20 would conflict with a scheduled Faculty Senate meeting. Given that most Graduate Council members do not have to attend the Senate meeting, Dr. Petzko asked Council members to reserve the afternoon of November 20 for a possible called meeting of the full Council to deal with curriculum proposals and/or any other business that cannot wait until January. We will know on the 13<sup>th</sup> whether or not we need to have another meeting on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

There being no other business, Brian O'Leary moved and Kristi Gibbs seconded that the meeting be adjourned. The motion passed and the meeting was adjourned at 4:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joe Dumas  
The Graduate School  
Approved 11.13.08