

REPORT OF THE ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, October 24, 2024

3:30 – 5:00 p.m., Zoom Meeting

Committee members present: Jenny Crowley, Ian Down, Maria Castillo Rodriguez, Melissa Hines, Adam Love, David Maslar, Jennifer Patrick, Shokoufeh Soleimani (GSS Vice President).

Other attendees: Michael Higdon (College of Law), Greg Kaplan (Graduate Council Chair Elect), Siris Laursen (Graduate Council Chair), Marla Bruner, Carl Collins, Dixie Thompson, Catherine Cox, and Grace Favier (Graduate School).

Call to order: APC Chair, Adam Love called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

Love welcomed those in attendance and reported two proposals are coming forward for discussion and vote.

Two proposals on the agenda for APC discussion

1. **Doctoral Degree Requirements**
2. **Dissertation Defense**

1. Doctoral Degree Requirements

Love reminded the committee members that this proposal was first discussed at the September 12 APC meeting.

D. Thompson: I have not received any opposition from any of the groups that have reviewed this proposal. This change does not require units to accept the hours. Units can be more restrictive, and the policy does state the student's doctoral committee must approve.

Love: Are there any questions or further discussion for the revision of the Doctoral Degree Requirements? With no further discussion a poll was launched to approve the revised proposal as presented.

Poll results: Unanimously approved.

UPDATE TO GRADUATE POLICIES

Currently, there is no provision for students who begin a doctoral program at another institution and choose to leave that institution and enroll at UT to complete the PhD. The most common scenario we encounter is when a faculty member moves to UT and wants to bring along PhD students to complete their degrees at UT. The proposed language would provide transparency to students and to faculty about what expectations would be in those cases.

The language in black font is the current language in the Graduate Catalog. The sections in red font contain the proposed updates to policy.

FROM THE GRADUATE CATALOG:

Doctoral Degree Requirements

Regardless of the type of doctoral program, the following are the minimum requirements expected of all doctorates. Departments and programs may impose stricter requirements.

- A candidate must earn a cumulative graduate grade point average of 3.00 on all graduate coursework taken at UT to receive the doctoral degree.
- A candidate for a doctoral degree who earned a graduate (typically a master's) degree prior to beginning the doctoral degree must complete a minimum of 24 credit hours of graduate courses at UT (exclusive of course 600 Dissertation). **For students who already hold a master's degree and who have begun a doctoral program at another institution before enrolling at UT, up to 12 hours of graduate level credits from the other institution may be counted toward the 24 hours needed for PhD, if approved by the student's doctoral committee.**
 - Additional credit hours will be determined by the nature of the doctoral degree to meet the required minimum of 30 credit hours master's and doctoral degrees set by Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. The SACSCOC minimum 30 credit hours may include dissertation, capstone, practicum or similar credit hours, as determined by the nature of the doctoral degree.

- If the doctoral program does not require a master's degree, the candidate must complete a minimum of 48 credit hours of graduate coursework beyond the baccalaureate degree (exclusive of course 600 Dissertation). **For students without a master's degree and who have begun a doctoral program at another institution before enrolling at UT, up to 24 hours of graduate level credits from the other institution may be counted toward the 48 hours needed for PhD, if approved by the student's doctoral committee.**
- For students earning a concurrent master's, a minimum of 18 additional credit hours of graduate coursework beyond the master's degree must be earned at UT plus completion of at least 24 credit hours of course 600 Dissertation. (Note: for programs requiring 36 rather than 48 credit hours of graduate coursework for the doctoral degree, students must earn at least an additional 6 graduate credit hours beyond the concurrent master's, plus 36 credit hours of dissertation.) Credit hours earned in 500 Thesis may not be counted toward the doctoral degree.
- A minimum of 50% of required graduate credit hours taken at UT (excluding dissertation hours), must be graded A-F.
- A minimum of 6 credit hours must be taken in UT courses at the 600-level, exclusive of course 600 Dissertation.

In addition to the above, the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) requires

- 24 credit hours of course 600 Doctoral Dissertation (see Continuous Enrollment under Enrollment and Registration).

In a separate section of the Graduate Catalog:

Credits Earned through Transfer, Correspondence, and Audits

Courses taken at another institution may be considered for transfer into a master's or EdS program as determined by the student's graduate committee and approved by the Dean of the Graduate School. At the doctoral level, courses are not officially transferred although they may be used to meet degree requirements. Where a requirement has been met through coursework in another program, the student may petition the academic unit for a waiver of the requirement at the doctoral level. Official transcripts must be sent directly to the Graduate School from all institutions previously attended before any credit will be considered.

To be transferred into a master's or EdS program at the UT a course must

- Be taken for graduate credit.
- Be a course transcribed for graduate credit and in which the student earned at least a grade of B.
- Not have been used for a previous degree.
- Be approved by the student's graduate committee and the Dean of the Graduate School on the Admission to Candidacy form.

Courses transferred to any graduate program will not affect the minimum residence requirements for the program, nor will they be included in calculating the student's UT grade point average.

Graduate course credit hours that **may not be applied** towards meeting degree requirements include:

- Graduate credits transferred from universities outside the University of Tennessee system cannot be used to meet the thesis or dissertation requirements or 600-level coursework requirements.
- Graduate credit for extension courses taken from other institutions is not transferable, nor is credit for any course taken at an unaccredited institution.
- Graduate credit previously earned as audits at any university.
- Graduate credit earned for work done by correspondence study at any university.

Additionally, there are restrictions on the application of course credit hours depending upon the degree program level:

- **Master's Degree:** A majority of the total credit hours required for a master's degree must be taken at UT. Transferred courses must have been completed within the six-year period prior to receipt of the degree. The courses must be listed on the Admission to Candidacy form and will be placed on the student's UT transcript only after admission to candidacy.
- **Specialist in Education Degree:** A maximum of 6 semester credit (9 quarter) hours of coursework beyond the master's degree may be transferred to an EdS program. Transferred courses in the most recent 30 credit hours taken for the degree must have been completed within the six-year period prior to the receipt of the degree. The courses must be listed on the Admission to Candidacy form and will be placed on the student's UT transcript only after admission to candidacy.
- **Doctoral Degree:** Coursework taken prior to admission to a doctoral program may be used toward the degree, as determined by the student's doctoral committee. Although the courses are used as part of the requirements toward the degree and are listed on the admission to candidacy, they are not officially transfer courses and are not placed on the student's UT transcript. As indicated in the Doctoral Degree Requirements: A candidate for a doctoral degree who earned a graduate (typically a master's) degree prior to beginning the doctoral degree must complete a minimum of 24 credit hours of graduate courses at UT (exclusive of course 600 Dissertation). **For students who already hold a master's degree and who have begun a doctoral program at another institution**

before enrolling at UT, up to 12 hours of doctoral level credits from the other institution may be counted toward the 24 hours needed for PhD, if approved by the student's doctoral committee. For students without a master's degree and who have begun a doctoral program at another institution before enrolling at UT, up to 24 hours of graduate level credits from the other institution may be counted toward the 48 hours needed for PhD, if approved by the student's doctoral committee.

2. Dissertation Defense – Requested Change in Policy

A. Love: The second proposal for review is for a change in the scheduling for the Dissertation Defense.

M. Bruner: The current policy states the examination must be scheduled through the Graduate School. This is no longer accurate. The departments internally schedule the examination. This slight change in policy is to remove four words so policy will match procedure. The yellow highlight shows the sentence that needs the edit, and the strikethrough shows the four words to be removed.

A. Love: any questions or discussion about this change? With none coming forward, we will launch a poll to vote on this change to the Dissertation Defense.

Poll results: Unanimously approved.

POLICY

Dissertation Defense

A PhD candidate must pass an oral examination on the dissertation. The dissertation, in the form approved by the major professor, must be distributed to the committee at least two weeks before the examination. **The examination must be scheduled through the Graduate School at least two weeks prior to the examination.** Academic units determine the appropriate venue for the comprehensive examination. The examination is announced publicly and is open to all faculty members. The defense of dissertation will be administered by all members of the doctoral committee after completion of the dissertation and all course requirements. This examination must be held at least two weeks before the final date for acceptance and approval of dissertation as given at the Graduation Deadlines webpage. The major professor must submit the results of the defense Pass/Fail form with the committee signatures provided by the Graduate School by the deadline date.

After the defense has been scheduled, subsequent emergency situations concerning participation of committee members require that the Director of Graduate Studies from the student's academic unit consults with the Dean of the Graduate School or their designee to determine whether the emergency situation warrants a rescheduling of the dissertation defense. The guiding principle for resolving such ad-hoc emergency situations will be to guard the integrity of the process

Rationale:

The Graduate School is requesting this change to ensure that policy matches procedure and alleviate confusion around required forms.

In the past, a Schedule of Defense form was submitted to the Graduate School to publicly announce a dissertation defense. Procedurally the Graduate School would process the form by posting the announcement to the campus calendar. For the last few years, the responsibility of posting the announcement of a defense has happened at the Program or departmental level. Thus, the notification to the Graduate School via the Schedule of Defense form is no longer necessary.

Updating the policy language will alleviate confusion around required forms for graduation, while keeping the dissertation defense timeline and public dissemination of information intact.

Are there any other items to bring forward for discussion?

D. Thompson: I can provide an update on the discussion from last year and also this year concerning graduate students getting the needed support during the summer semester when many of our faculty are on nine-month appointments. This can create tension when students want support and faculty are not available. We talked with the Executive Council of the Faculty Senate about this and Derek Alderman, Faculty Senate President, asked Siris Laursen and I put something in writing for them to review and discuss. There are a lot of questions and discussions at this time but no answers.

A. Love: Thank you, Dr. Thompson, for this update. Are there any questions or other items for discussion? With none coming forward our meeting is adjourned.

The meeting adjourned at 3:45.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Cox
Graduate Council Liaison