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Academic Policy Committee Report - September 17, 2020

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Recommended Citation

Graduate Council, "Academic Policy Committee Report - September 17, 2020" (2020). *Academic Policy Committee Reports*.

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REPORT OF THE ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING
Thursday, September 17, 2020
3:30 – 5:00 p.m., Zoom Meeting

Committee members present: Eric Boder (Chair), Patricia Bamwine, Julie Bonom, Austin Boyd (GSS President), Lars Dzikus, Luis Finotti, Melissa Hines, Greg Kaplan, Mohammed Mohsin.

Other attendees: Sara Bradberry, Amy Broemmel (Graduate Council Chair), Yvonne Kilpatrick, Dixie Thompson, and Catherine Cox (Graduate Council Liaison)

Eric Boder called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

Agenda Items:

1. *Transcripts*

Proposal presented by Dean Dixie Thompson.

Currently, we require official transcripts from all institutions where credits were earned post-high school. The applicants can submit unofficial documents when they first apply. This gives the departments/units an opportunity to review and make an admission decision without waiting for official transcripts. If admitted without official transcripts, a hold is placed on the student's registration and they cannot register for a second semester until official transcripts are received. This is needed because one of our accreditation requirements is that for a person to be in a graduate program they must have earned a bachelor's degree. Unfortunately, not all applicants accurately report their past academic history, so official transcript are needed.

We accept unofficial transcripts and allow the application go forward for review in the beginning because:

1. The student may be completing their final year of earning their undergraduate degree at their undergraduate institution and therefore, would not yet have an official transcript showing degree confirmation.
2. Cost. We do not want to cause an unnecessary burden on the student on the front end, if they are not admissible in the program.

Our current process works just fine the majority of the time. The Haslam College of Business has asked that we look at this policy because sometimes applicants may have difficulty securing their official transcripts from a foreign institution or if the credits/degree were earned many years previous.

Currently, when this happens, the Graduate Admissions Office has a process in which departments can request an exception.

We absolutely must have official transcripts from the institution where students earned their bachelors and/or master's degree. The question is do we need an official transcript from an institution where a student took just a few hours?

Most institutions require official transcripts, as we do. Yvonne Kilpatrick looked at peer institutions and has a report for us.

Yvonne Kilpatrick, Director of Graduate Admissions

I created a chart that shows at the time of the application submitted, the policy for some of our comparative, aspirational, and trending institutions. See *Attachment 1 (Summary of Transcript Submission Scenarios)*.

Examples:

- Auburn (the most extreme) requires official transcript from all institutions attended (domestic and international).
- Clemson for domestic: requires copies of transcripts from each institution that will award a degree. For international: copies of transcript from each institution attended.
- Alabama: copies of transcripts from all institutions where 15/16 or greater hours earned (domestic and international).

At UTK, we currently require copies of each institution attended. See *Attachment 2 (UTK Graduate Admissions Policy)* The *2012 Essential Guide to Graduate Admissions, Council of Graduate Schools* (in partnership with the National Association of Graduate Admission Professionals, NAAGAP), recommends that transcripts be submitted from all institutions where the applicant has attended. There has not been an updated addition of this Guide.

Questions:

1. What about when a student studies abroad, those courses are transferred back to their home institution and then appear on the degree granting institution. Do we really need official transcripts from that international school?

When a student transfers work from one institution to another, the institution that is receiving the official transcripts evaluates the work and will accept only what is within their policies: i.e., will not accept grades of D or F. So, there could be hidden concerns that would only appear on the official transcript. So, not all the work the student did may appear on the transcript that shows the transfer work.

2. For the Haslam College of Business, the question came about because students applying to the Physicians Executive MBA Program may have earned their medical degree years before. Returning to school years later, it may now be difficult for the applicant to obtain an official transcript. In some cases, the institution may have closed.

Sometimes there may even be political issues as to the difficulty of obtaining official transcripts, such as a war-torn country.

3. Do we really want to change the global policy when it works 99 percent of the time and when we have an exception policy in place for those few? The programs may then have to change their admissions requirements.

We want to see official transcripts from any work post bachelors.

Outcome: *We will bring this forward as a discussion item in Graduate Council and receive feedback to determine the level of interest.*

2. Policies and Procedures

Dean Dixie Thompson

I charged my team to look at our policies and procedures to see if we are creating barriers for students, particularly thinking of possible issues of systemic racism. This fall, Associate Dean Brothers and Assistant Dean Kilpatrick will begin training programs in holistic admissions practices. We hope to expand this to the entire campus next year.

An area we have made changes in recent years is with the Leave of Absence Policy. We loosened some of the parameters for the approval of LOA. One restriction that is in the LOA policy is for financial reasons. Is this wording in the policy something that we should reconsider? I will bring forward a proposal for you to consider that suggests that we remove that financial wording from the policy. Financial pressures are something that all our graduate students encounter. I imagine that our first generation students or our students who do not have families with significant financial resources may at times, struggle financially.

There was positive feedback with Dr. Thompson's suggestion.

Question:

In the spring when the COVID 19 pandemic hit, there had to be decisions made on the fly by the University and by the Graduate School. How we will determine if an issue needs to go through APC or when can the Graduate School make the decision?

D. Thompson: In the spring, when things were happening so quickly, the initial impetus came from what the Undergraduate Council was doing, i.e., calendar decisions, timelines and grades. I brought these issues to the Graduate Council and we had an emergency meeting to discuss the issues. I believe this is still the way to proceed because we want to have faculty input in our decisions. At this time, nothing that I am aware is coming forward from Undergraduate Council. R.J. Hinde and I meet regularly for such discussions.

Dr. Boder thanked everyone for the discussion and feedback of these two items.

Meeting adjourned at 4:25.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Cox
Graduate Council Liaison

Attachment 1

Summary of Transcript Submission Scenarios-Comparative, Aspirational, Trending:

Time of Application Submission:

Description	Comparative or Aspirational	Trending
Official transcripts-all institutions attended-Domestic and International	Auburn	
Copies of transcripts from each institution that will award a degree-Domestic	Clemson Virginia Tech	University of Oregon
Copies of transcripts from each institution that will award a degree-International	Virginia Tech	
Copies of transcripts from each institution where degrees have/will be awarded degrees plus other transcripts may be required by programs		University of Cincinnati
Copies of transcripts from each institution where degrees have/will be awarded plus separate list of other institutions attended-Domestic and International		Rackham Graduate School- University of Michigan
Copies of transcripts from each institution attended-Domestic	Louisiana State University of Kentucky Purdue University of Georgia University of Florida	
Copies of transcripts from each institution attended-International	Clemson Louisiana State University of Kentucky Purdue University of Georgia University of Florida	
Copies of transcripts from all institutions where 15/16 or greater credit hours earned-Domestic	University of Alabama	Georgetown University
Copies of transcripts from all institutions where 15 or greater credit hours earned-International	University of Alabama	Georgetown University

Attachment 2

Graduate Admission Transcript Submission Graduate Catalog Policy Information for APC Discussion, September 17 2020 Meeting

Charge from Dean Thompson:

Review UT Knoxville Graduate School transcript submission policy and practices in light of needs of the UT graduate programs, accreditation or institutional policy considerations, as well as examining practices at other institutions. If deemed appropriate, develop a proposal to modify the existing catalog policy related to submission of transcripts at the time of application and at the time of admission. Submit proposal to Academic Policy Committee for consideration. Timeline is early Fall 2020.

Current Graduate Catalog Policy:

Application Steps for Admission https://catalog.utk.edu/content.php?catoid=30&navoid=3866#appli_steps_adm

To apply for admission, the following materials must be submitted to Graduate Admissions through the online application submission process:

One unofficial transcript from all colleges and universities attended submitted online at the time of application to the Graduate School. See [Graduate Admissions website](#) for more information. (bullet #3 in full text)

After admission is offered, the following must be provided:

Official transcripts and degree certificates (if separate from the transcript). See [Graduate Admissions website](#) for more information.

The Graduate School will reserve the right to revoke admission to a student if any unofficial or official documents are found to be fraudulent following review and comparison.

Registration is prohibited after the first semester of enrollment until students have submitted the official copy of transcripts, including any degree certificates or degree confirmations, from all institutions previously attended.

Some Questions to Consider:

- (1) Should we continue to require applicants to submit transcripts from all institutions attended as: (1) copies uploaded at the time of application and (2) official transcripts submitted in approved format following admission?
- (2) If yes, to parts 1 and/or 2 in question 1, should we allow individual programs the discretion to waive transcript requirements that are not pertinent to their application review or to verification following admission?
- (3) Should we require all transcripts uploaded in order to be considered for admission and only official transcripts, where degrees have or will be earned, at the time of admission?
- (4) How or do programs review transcripts that are deemed unrelated to consideration for the program of study to which an applicant is applying, such as transcripts showing a minimal number of courses taken at a community college.
- (5) Are there implications to consider if the submission of transcripts from every institution attended is no longer required?

Best Practices in Submission of Transcripts When Applying and Following Admission to Graduate School

I. Resources we have relied upon:

- (1) **National Professional Organizations Focused on Graduate School Practices and Advocacy**
An Essential Guide to Graduate Admissions, 2012, Council of Graduate Schools (in partnership with the National Association of Graduate Admission Professionals)-stated purpose to identify and discuss good practices for graduate admissions.

Required application material. Regardless of what standards are set by individual departments, all applications to graduate programs should include, at a minimum, the following elements:

Official transcripts of all previous academic work (with certified translations, for non-English transcripts) from which undergraduate grade-point averages can be computed.

Footnote: Some institutions accept unofficial transcripts or last 60 hours transcripts for screening or evaluation purposes. Students who are accepted must submit official transcripts at a later date. When unofficial review transcripts are submitted, if the student is accepted it should be a provisional (or tentative) acceptance, pending receipt within a specific timeframe of official copies of all transcripts.

(2) Practices at Comparative and Aspirational Institutions

Auburn University (Comparative)

One official transcript of all undergraduate and any graduate credits from each school previously attended. If an Auburn University transcript, the Graduate School will acquire the transcript for you. Official electronic transcripts from domestic institutions may be sent to graduatetranscripts@auburn.edu.

International applicants should provide an official original language transcript and final diploma/certificate(s) accompanied by a certified English translation of each document.

Clemson University (Comparative)

Domestic:

A copy of your unofficial transcripts from each institution you attended and that awarded or will be awarding you a degree(s) should be attached to and submitted with the online application for admission. You may also include documentation of any additional coursework which may be relevant to the graduate degree you wish to pursue at Clemson University. A minimum of a bachelor's degree from an approved institution whose scholastic rating is satisfactory to the University, or an equivalent degree from an institution outside the US, is required for all graduate students. Additional degree requirements will vary by program and degree. Final official transcripts are only required of those applicants who are offered admission.

University Graduate Admissions office in a sealed envelope. Title of the degree earned and the date awarded must be noted for the transcript to be considered final official. Official certificates or diplomas in sealed envelopes from the issuing institution should accompany any transcripts that do not note the degree earned and date awarded directly on the transcripts. Final official transcripts should be submitted before or during your first semester.

International:

A copy of your unofficial transcripts from each institution you have attended should be attached to and submitted with the online application for admission. A minimum of a bachelor's degree from an approved institution whose scholastic rating is satisfactory to the University, or an equivalent degree from an institution outside the US, is required for all graduate students. Additional degree requirements will vary by program and degree.

Official transcripts are only required of those applicants who are offered admission. If you are admitted, your final official transcripts must be sent directly from the issuing institution to the Clemson University Graduate Admissions office in a sealed envelope. Title of the degree earned and the date awarded must be noted for the transcript to be considered final official. Official certificates or diplomas in sealed envelopes from the issuing institution should accompany any transcripts that do not note the degree earned and date awarded directly on the transcripts. Graduate Admissions will not accept faxed copies of transcripts as official. A transcript in an envelope that has been opened is no longer considered official.

Louisiana State University (Comparative)

Applicants **must** submit an official transcript (in a sealed envelope) from each college and/or university attended to the Office of Graduate Admissions. Acceptable electronic transcript exchange systems are SPEEDE Server, E-Script, National Student Clearinghouse, and Parchment.

Transfer credit posted on the records of other institutions is not accepted in lieu of transcripts from the original institutions. Official transcripts for these credits must also be submitted. Military applicants are required to submit an official copy of their Joint Service Transcript (JST), if applicable.

Unofficial transcripts may be uploaded for review; however if you are admitted and intend to enroll, you must provide an official transcript within 30 days after the first day of class. An applicant's admission decision may be revoked if a review of official transcripts does not meet academic requirements.

University of Alabama (Comparative)

You must upload an **unofficial transcript** for each higher learning institution (including community colleges) at which you earned at least 15 credit hours of coursework.

Official transcripts will be requested after admission.

University of Kentucky (Comparative)

You will be asked to upload copies of transcripts from all higher education institutions attended and, in the case of domestic students, to self-report cumulative GPA's for each institution. For degree-seeking students, the Graduate School requires an overall undergraduate grade point average of at least 2.75 and 3.00 on all graduate work; individual programs may have higher requirements. Students who wish to calculate their GPAs for self-reporting may wish to use <https://www.scholaro.com/>. If you are offered admission and decide to enroll, you will then be required to submit official transcripts to the Graduate School.

Virginia Tech (Comparative)

While completing your online application and prior to submitting it, you will be required to upload one copy of your scanned official transcript from each institution from which you have earned or will earn an undergraduate or graduate degree. Do not send transcripts for community college attendance or from any institution where you enrolled in classes but did not earn a degree.

Please do not mail your official transcripts to us until you have received an offer of admission from Virginia Tech (see below).

If you are offered admission, you will be required to provide an official copy of your transcript(s) upon the awarding of your degree and its posting to your transcript prior to your enrollment at Virginia Tech.

Purdue University (Aspirational)

You must upload to the [online application](#) transcript(s) and/or academic document(s) for every institution of higher education you attended regardless of whether or not a degree was received. If a degree was received then it must be printed on the transcripts. If no degree conferral is printed on the transcripts then a copy of the original diploma (degree certificate) is needed. If the documents are not in English, you must upload an English translation certified by the college or university that issued it.

You must provide official transcripts and/or academic records at the request of the graduate program or if you are admitted and choose to enroll. An official transcript bears the original signature of the registrar and/or the original seal of the issuing institution. Official documents should be submitted to:

Office of Graduate Admissions
Purdue University Graduate School
155 South Grant Street, YONG 170
West Lafayette, IN 47907

Transcripts and/or English translations must be mailed directly from a Registrar's office to the Office of Graduate Admissions. (You can choose to send the transcripts yourself, but the transcripts must be in an envelope sealed by the Registrar).

If you are admitted and choose to enroll at Purdue University, you must submit official transcripts before you can register for your second session.

University of Georgia (Aspirational)

Domestic: Applicants should submit unofficial transcripts from all institutions attended as part of the online application. Unofficial transcripts not submitted as part of the online application can be emailed to gradadm@uga.edu. Official transcripts are not required during the review process and will only be required for applicants who are offered admission. Do not mail official transcripts until offered admission.

If offered admission, the Graduate School prefers electronic delivery of your transcripts from your institution via secure services such as Scrip-Safe, AVOW, Docufied and National Clearinghouse. Electronic transcripts should be sent directly to gradadm@uga.edu. If electronic delivery is not available, applicants can submit one official transcript in a sealed envelope from each institution of higher education attended, except the University of Georgia. University of Georgia transcripts are on file.

Transfer credit posted on the records of other institutions, including the University of Georgia, is not accepted in lieu of transcripts from the original institutions. Official transcripts for these credits must be submitted. This also pertains to study abroad credit that is posted on records as transfer credit to other institutions.

International: Applicants should submit unofficial transcripts from all institutions attended as part of the online application. Unofficial transcripts not submitted as part of the online application can be emailed to gradadm@uga.edu. Official transcripts are not required during the review process and will only be required for applicants who are offered admission. Do not mail official transcripts until offered admission.

If offered admission, applicants must submit one official (certified) copy of academic records from each institution of higher education that the applicant has attended to the Graduate School. Official documents must bear an original certification of the appropriate school official or office. Photocopies of certified documents are not acceptable. Coursework completed at one institution but listed on the record of a second institution is not acceptable. A separate copy of the record from the first institution is required.

University of Florida (Aspirational)

For purpose of initial review, the Office of Admissions accepts unofficial transcripts. Applicants may upload unofficial transcripts within the academic background section of their application, or if not available at the time of application, through their application status page at a later date.

Applicants who receive an offer of admissions should arrange to have official transcripts sent to the UF Office of Admissions from each postsecondary institution attended. If you attended UF as your postsecondary institution, you do not have to order a transcript from the Office of the University Registrar.

All academic credentials become property of the university. They will not be returned to you or forwarded to a third party. For diplomas and academic credentials that are only issued once, please send an attested or certified copy of the original.

University of Minnesota (Aspirational)

- When applying for admission, upload **unofficial transcripts/academic records/credentials to your application**.
- Upload documents for all post-secondary (college/University) institutions you have attended.
- Please include all incomplete or partial academic records.
- International credentials must include both the original language document and an English translation. Include original language diplomas if a degree was conferred.
- The Graduate Admissions Office reserves the right to request official documents if needed for verification. **Do not** send official transcripts/academic records/credentials unless we request them.
- Please note: all credentials uploaded by an applicant to an application are considered unofficial. Transcripts are considered official if they are sent directly to our office from the issuing institution.

Official transcripts/credentials are required **after** you are admitted to a graduate program. At the time of admission, your application checklist will indicate the specific credentials that we require from you. **It is your responsibility to request official transcripts/credentials from the required institution(s).**

(3) **Submission Requirements Stated by Professional Evaluation and Credentialing Agencies Publishing Country-Specific Document Requirements**

(<https://www.edperspective.org/documentation-requirements.php>) to advise applicants or admitted students about the submission of official international transcripts. The requirements are published on the Graduate School website for countries from which the majority of applications are submitted.

II. Examples of Trending Practices in Submission of Transcripts When Applying and Following Admission to Graduate School:

University of Oregon

<https://gradschool.uoregon.edu/admissions/how-to-apply/domestic> -at time of application copies of all transcripts where degrees are awarded (bachelor's and subsequent). Following admission, official transcripts where degrees are awarded.

Virginia Tech

https://graduateschool.vt.edu/admissions/how-to-apply/submitting_transcripts.html at time of application copies of all transcripts where degrees are awarded (bachelor's and subsequent). Following admission, official transcripts where degrees are awarded.

University of Cincinnati

<https://grad.uc.edu/admissions/policy.html> in addition to above, states programs may require additional transcripts

Rackham Graduate School-University of Michigan

<https://rackham.umich.edu/admissions/applying/transcripts/> - list community colleges, other schools where attended in a separate section of the application

Georgetown University

<https://scs.georgetown.edu/admissions/how-to-apply/masters-degrees/> -all institutions where 16 or more hours are earned at time of application and official transcripts from all institutions where degrees have been earned if admitted (official must be received prior to the start of classes.