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REPORT OF THE ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, March 4, 2021

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, Greg Kaplan, Mohammed Mohsin.

Other attendees: Sara Bradberry, Stefanie Ohnesorg (Graduate Council Chair-elect), Dixie Thompson, and Catherine Cox (Graduate Council Liaison).

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

Agenda Item:

1. Proposal to edit catalog language for Grievances and Appeals policy

Boder reminded the committee: the need to revise the language in the Graduate Catalog for the Grievances and Appeals policy is because of the revisions coming forward from the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards concerning their appeal process.

We need to separate out the student misconduct judicial process (if academic misconduct has taken place) from the grade appeal process. The grade appeal process should go through the Graduate Appeals Committee, as grades are part of the academic process, not to go through and be part of the misconduct judicial process.

Dr. Dixie Thompson submitted a proposal to revise the language for the Grievances and Appeals process. Are there any questions or edits concerning the proposal?

Current Graduate Catalog language

Grievances and Appeals

The *Graduate Council Appeal Procedure* can be obtained at the Graduate School Appeals Committee website. In brief, appeals should be handled first at the department level through the student's academic advisor, the director of graduate studies, or the department or program head. Further appeal may be made to the dean of the respective college, the Graduate Council Appeals Committee through the Assistant Dean of the Graduate School, and ultimately to the Dean of the Graduate School. Per Board of Trustees bylaws, Article V, Section 5, "Any employee or student of the University who feels that he or she may have a grievance against the University shall have the right of appeal through the appropriate Chancellor or Vice President to the President of the University, except as otherwise provided by University policy." In the case of UT students, they may appeal the decision of the Dean of the Graduate School to the Provost and then the Chancellor.

Appeals may involve the interpretation of and adherence to university, college, and department policies and procedures as they apply to graduate education and the issuance of grades based on specific allowable reasons stipulated in the *Graduate Council Appeal Procedure*.

Appeal procedures in regard to allegations of misconduct or academic dishonesty are presented in Hilltopics under Student Code of Conduct.

Students with grievances related to race, sex, color, religion, national origin, age, disability or veteran status should file a formal complaint with the Office of Equity and Diversity, 1840 Melrose Avenue.

Proposed Language

The *Graduate Council Appeal Procedure* can be obtained at the Graduate School Appeals Committee website. There are three types of appeals that may come before the Graduate Council's Appeals Committee: (1) students with grievances concerning the interpretation of and adherence to university, college, and departmental policies and procedures as they apply to graduate education; (2) students with grievances concerning grades; and (3) students with

grievances concerning academic penalties imposed for academic and/or research misconduct. When possible, grievances should be resolved at departmental or college level without coming to the Graduate Council.

To initiate an appeal with the Appeals committee, a student should contact the Assistant Dean of the Graduate School at gradschool@utk.edu. The Assistant Dean will work with the student and the Chair of the Appeals Committee to process the appeal as outlined in the Graduate Council Appeal Procedure. Once the Appeals Committee has made a determination, it will send its recommendation to the Dean of the Graduate School. The Dean will review the Committee's recommendation along with all relevant information. Subsequently, the Dean will issue a decision. Notification of this decision will be sent to the student, the Chair of the Appeals Committee, and the Assistant Dean to be entered into the student's record.

Students may appeal the decision of the Dean of the Graduate School to the Provost and then the Chancellor.

Academic misconduct (plagiarism, cheating, etc.) is a violation of the UT Student Code of Conduct, and allegations of academic misconduct are handled as described in Hilltopics under Student Code of Conduct. Allegations of research misconduct are managed through the Office of Research Integrity. Academic penalties (e.g., dismissal from a program) and grade penalties resulting from research or academic misconduct are heard by the Appeals Committee as described above.

Students with grievances related to race, sex, color, religion, national origin, age, disability or veteran status should file a formal complaint with the Office of Equity and Diversity, 1840 Melrose Avenue.

Discussion:

D. Thompson: it will also be necessary to revise language for the Appeals Procedure Process.

There was a suggestion to create a flow chart of the appeals process to publish on the Appeals Committee webpage.

Boder: Any further discussion? With no further discussion, Boder asked for a vote.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, APC members voted and approved the proposed catalog language to revise the wording in the Graduate Catalog for Grievances and Appeals. Voting was unanimous.

Eric Boder

There are no other items on our Agenda. However, I would like to bring forward a discussion item that came about from our last Graduate Council meeting. The concern and discussion was about the cost of graduate student fees.

Graduate student fees:

Currently, a petition is circulating trying to reduce the amount of fees that graduate students pay each semester. Out-of-pocket fees for graduate students on assistantships can be very high. Some graduate students (depending on the program) pay differential fees. What sources are available for graduate students on assistantships with these out-of-pocket fees?

- Unless noted in the contract, those differential fees cannot be charged against the grant or contract.
- Departments have an option to pay the fees from the Department E or Gift R account.

Full-time status with 6 hours on a half-time assistantship and 9 hours on a quarter-time assistantship seems logical when you consider 12 credit hours is a full-time course load for undergraduate students who have no assistantships.

Registration of course 600:

Currently, once PhD students begin registration of course 600, they must continue to register each semester for a minimum of 3 credit hours of course 600 until they defend and submit their dissertation. Other institutions have a "dissertation status" in their doctoral programs. Could we possibly adopt a policy that once the required 24 credit hours of course 600 is met, that we might then reduce the registration hours of course 600?

D. Thompson

- All the deans in the Southeast Conference meet regularly. I will bring up in our discussions dissertation research hours. I will share the results to begin a benchmark against some of our peers.

- For some programs, the faculty time in mentoring and guiding doctoral students may be higher than in other programs.
- We want timely graduations for our graduate students. We want our students to be productive, excel and finish.

With no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 4:05.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Cox
Graduate Council Liaison