

The Graduate Council

Purpose

The Graduate Council, which reports to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, defines, in consultation with the Dean of the Graduate School, the policies that govern graduate education at the University in compliance with the regulations of the University, the Board of Supervisors for the University of Louisiana System, the Board of Regents, and the State of Louisiana. Specifically, the Council defines minimum criteria relating to admission, retention, and completion of students in degree and non-degree graduate programs; its jurisdiction also extends to policies governing graduate faculty membership and application of college criteria for that membership, revision and/or review of existing graduate programs, graduate degree requirements, graduate courses, and graduate assistantships and fellowships. The Council also serves as an appeals committee in cases concerning admission or readmission to graduate programs, and as a final hearing committee in certain cases involving grade appeals. Finally, the Council advises the Dean of the Graduate School on matters pertaining to graduate education.

Membership and Structure

The Graduate Council shall consist of twenty-seven (27) members distributed as follows:

- two members shall be elected by the graduate faculty within each academic college with a graduate degree program
- one member of the graduate faculty shall be appointed by the dean of each academic college with a graduate degree program
- three members of the graduate faculty shall be appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School, in consultation with the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs, to provide balance and equity, and who shall serve terms of one or two years
- two graduate student members shall serve one-year terms; one shall be the Graduate Student Organization president (or his/her designee) and the other shall be appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School
- the Dean of the Graduate School shall serve as an ex-officio voting member

Elected members and members appointed by deans of the academic colleges shall serve staggered three-year terms.

The membership shall include, if possible, no more than one elected member from each academic department or school.

Deans of the academic colleges, including associate and assistant deans, shall not be eligible for membership on the Graduate Council. Department heads and school directors shall be eligible for membership on the Graduate Council.

The Dean of the Graduate School shall serve as Secretary to the Council; the Dean may be assisted in these duties by members of the Graduate School staff.

At its final meeting of each academic year, the Council shall elect a Chairperson from among its continuing members to serve a term of one year beginning on the first day of the month following the election.

The Chair, in consultation with the outgoing Chair and the Dean of the Graduate School, shall be empowered to act on behalf of the Council during the summer months. Actions taken shall be limited appointment of standing committees and to those of an urgent nature; it shall not include Catalog policy or governance changes. A report of all summer actions take shall be provided to the Council at the September Council meeting.

Meetings

The Council shall meet on the second Tuesday of each month during the academic year (with the exception of August and January), but may make modifications to this schedule as it deems appropriate. Should the University be on official holiday on this day, the meeting shall be moved to the first Tuesday of the month. Other meetings of the Council may be called by its Chairperson, the Dean of the Graduate School, or the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs.

The Dean of the Graduate School, in consultation with the Chair of the Graduate Council, is charged with the task of setting the agenda for Council meetings.

Quorum shall be defined as 50% plus one of the Council membership.

Council meetings shall be conducted following [Robert's Rules of Order](#). Official actions and decisions must be approved by a quorum (voting may be conducted by secret ballot if requested by any Council member or the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs). In some cases, the Chair of the Council may require a majority vote of the full voting membership of the Council to approve an action or decision.

Vacancies

The Council may remove a member who misses two consecutive meetings of the Council. Members who were removed by the Council cannot be immediately reappointed.

The replacement for an elected faculty member shall be appointed from the same academic college by the Chairperson of the Council. The replacement of a faculty member who was appointed by an academic dean shall be made by the dean of that academic college; replacement of a faculty member appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School shall be made by the Dean of the Graduate School. Replacement of a student member who was appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School shall be made by the Dean of the Graduate School; replacement of the Graduate Student Organization president member shall be made by the Graduate Student Organization.

Committees

The five standing committees appointed by the Graduate Council include Appeals, Curriculum, Fellowships, Graduate Faculty Membership, and Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access. The duties and operational guidelines for these committees shall be established by the Council and published in the Faculty Handbook.

Prior to the end of the Spring semester, a call for interest in serving on the standing committees shall be issued to all members of the Graduate Faculty. This call shall be simultaneous to the call for nominations for election to the Graduate Council.

Membership of the standing committees shall be appointed by the Chair of the Graduate Council, in consultation with the outgoing Chair and the Dean of the Graduate School, for rotating terms of three years. Members may be reappointed.

Unless otherwise specified, faculty membership of the standing committees shall be restricted to continuing, fulltime faculty who are members of the Graduate Faculty (but not necessarily members of the Graduate Council).

Each standing committee shall include members from each academic college.

The Council may authorize a committee to act independently on behalf of the Council, except in matters involving policies or regulations. In such matters, a committee may make recommendations to the Council, which may accept, modify, or reject them.

The Council may establish and appoint other standing or *ad hoc* committees as it deems appropriate.

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Appeals Standing Committee Guidelines

The Committee on Graduate Appeals reports to the Graduate Council and considers appeals from:

- applicants who have been denied admission to Graduate School;
- applicants who wish to apply for academic amnesty;
- students who have become ineligible to continue (or to re-enter) as a result of not maintaining a 3.0 GPA at all times, earning more than two grades of C, earning a grade lower than C, and/or failing to meet any other requirements in their course of study;
- students who wish to transfer credit from a non-U.S. institution; and
- graduate degree programs, University offices, or members of the faculty that wish to offer an assistantship to a graduate student who is not in regular status (excluding international students admitted in conditional status who are otherwise eligible for regular admission).

In rare instances, where one or several key regulations of the Graduate School are involved, other appeals are considered by this committee and/or are referred to the Graduate Council.

Decisions of the committee are definitive, but they are reported to the Graduate Council so that it can review the reasonableness and soundness of decisions.

A student who is ineligible to be admitted to or to continue in the Graduate School is notified of his/her status by the Dean of the Graduate School. A prospective student has the right to appeal an unfavorable decision by the Graduate School on an application for admission or readmission, and a graduate student who has become ineligible to continue (or to re-enter) may petition for reinstatement.

Information about the appeal process is available from the Graduate School.

Any prospective student or student initiating an appeal is required to submit a written letter of petition to the Graduate School setting forth the specific nature of the appeal, giving documented reasons for failing to meet established standards of admission or retention, and offering an action plan to meet those standards going forward. A student may present additional letters of recommendation regarding academic ability and maturity. These letters may come from faculty members, employers, or others who have knowledge of the situation.

Upon receipt of an appeal, the Graduate School will contact the department to request a "letter of recommendation" from the graduate degree program for which the applicant has applied or the student has been admitted. Each graduate program must have a procedure for handling appeals that results in a programmatic recommendation to the Appeals Committee. The letter of recommendation from the graduate degree program may recommend support, support with conditions, or denial of support and should be transmitted directly to the Graduate School. If there is no written response from the graduate program, the appeal will not be heard by the Appeals Committee.

The Graduate School will provide to Appeals Committee, as appropriate, additional information including, but not limited to, GPAs, GRE or GMAT scores, written letters of recommendation for admission or continuation from an official representative of the graduate program concerned and from faculty members who have knowledge of the student's past performance and capabilities.

The more important criteria in considering an appeal include the student's GRE or GMAT scores, past record of performance, appropriate GPAs, and the recommendation of the graduate degree program. In the case of a student seeking readmission to the Graduate School, the committee may readmit the student in conditional status with the proviso that the student meets certain special requirements. Stipulations, for example, may include one or more of the following:

- requirements set by the graduate degree program in its letter(s) of recommendation
- restrictions on the maximum or minimum course load
- requiring that certain courses be retaken
- restrictions on the number of credit hours or semesters to bring up the GPA to above a 3.0
- submitting satisfactory scores on the GRE or GMAT

(In some instances students may be advised by the committee to consider enrolling in Special Non-degree status or in Entree status or to register in an undergraduate program.)

The chain of appeal is:

- A. Graduate School
- B. Committee on Graduate Appeals
- C. Graduate Council
- D. Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs

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Curriculum Standing Committee Guidelines

The purpose of the Graduate Curriculum Committee is to evaluate graduate course additions, deletions, or changes and to make recommendations to the Graduate Council.

The committee shall follow University style and guidelines as set by offices of Academic Affairs and the Registrar for course additions, deletions, and changes.

Prior to reaching the committee, the completed forms signed by the individual initiating the course change, the department head/school director, and the dean of the college are sent to an administrative staff member in the Academic Affairs to check for compliance with the University style guide and completion of information. If style is incorrect or information is missing, a member of the Academic Affairs staff shall work with the Graduate School staff to gather the necessary information and/or shall return forms to the individual who initiated the form.

Upon review and acceptance by Academic Affairs and the Graduate School, completed forms signed by the individual initiating the course change, the department head/school director, and the dean of the college, are digitized by the Graduate School and provided to the committee chairperson to facilitate committee review.

In evaluating the courses, the major concerns of the committee are the following:

1. The clarity of the course title, description, and any prerequisite and/or co-requisite requirements.
2. The justification for the course addition, deletion, or change to the course.
3. Duplication and/or infringement on another department's domain.
4. Quality of the course, qualifications of the faculty, and resources available for the course.

Course proposals may be tentatively approved by the committee pending satisfactory explanation of minor questions. Final approval is left to the discretion of the committee chairperson. Courses not approved by the committee are sent back to the department from which they originated with an explanation of why the course was not approved.

The committee considers course proposals, makes recommendations for approval/denial, and submits a written report to the Graduate Council. Decisions of the committee are definitive, but they are reported to the Graduate Council so that it can review the reasonableness and soundness of decisions. A copy of the report is presented to the members of the Graduate Council.

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Fellowships Standing Committee Guidelines

The Graduate Fellowships Committee serves as a recommending body reporting to the Graduate Council.

The committee is charged with making recommendations to the Graduate Council with regard to setting and reviewing the qualifications for eligibility and continuation for both the University master's and doctoral fellowships. It shall also set the University deadlines for applications for these fellowship awards.

The committee is responsible for selecting superior applicants as the recipients of the University master's fellowships, which are awarded for one academic year. It shall report to the Graduate Council these selections.

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Graduate Faculty Membership Standing Committee Guidelines

Appointment to the Graduate Faculty recognizes significant scholarly accomplishments and/or professional accomplishments and the ability to work constructively with graduate students. It confers on a faculty member the authority to direct theses and/or dissertations, to serve on advisory committees for graduate students, and the right to participate in the governance of graduate education at the departmental, college, and university levels.

The Committee on Graduate Faculty Membership is responsible for:

- offering assistance to the Graduate Council in the formation of the University-wide standards and guidelines for Graduate Faculty membership;
- review of Graduate Faculty applications as directed in the University Guidelines for Graduate Faculty Membership; and
- submission of a recommendation to the Graduate Council on all reviews completed.

Each College Peer Review Committee shall include a member of the Committee on Graduate Faculty Membership from the affiliated college to serve as an ex-officio member.

The chair of the Committee on Graduate Faculty Membership shall be responsible for reviewing, with the Dean of the Graduate School, all of the applications along with the college recommendations and forwarding applications that require review as specified in the University policy to the Committee on Graduate Faculty Membership for review.

The Committee will review applications and college recommendations for appointment to the Graduate Faculty only when any one of the three academic college review entities (1) recommends denial of membership to the Graduate Faculty, (2) recommends appointment at a different level than applied for by the faculty member, and/or (3) when materials or recommendations are absent or inconsistent in any way. In the event that the committee recommends the disapproval of an application that has been supported by the college or appointment at a level different than the applicant applied for, it shall provide specific reasons for its recommendation based on University standards or college guidelines.

Upon completion of each review cycle, the committee shall include in its report to the Council any problems with the process, implementation, and/or interpretation of the University policy and/or the individual colleges' criteria.

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Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access Standing Committee Guidelines

The Graduate Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access Committee (IDEA Committee) is responsible for ensuring that inclusion, diversity, equity and access is fostered in the University's graduate community, particularly for its graduate students, but also for its graduate faculty.

The IDEA Committee's understanding of diversity is broad, including but not limited to race and ethnicity, gender (including trans and nonbinary people), sexuality, age, religion, disability, national identity, socioeconomic background. Moreover, it includes communities that have been historically marginalized and/or underrepresented in any given discipline.

The IDEA Committee is charged with reviewing and advising the Graduate School and Graduate Council on initiatives to increase diversity, equity, inclusivity, and access at all stages of graduate education, from inquiry and recruitment to admission, matriculation and graduation of graduate students.

The IDEA Committee serves as liaison between organizations led by and serving graduate students, allowing for the continued sustainability of these entities as resources for graduate student success. Drawing guidance from the imperatives of the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan for Inclusive Excellence (or any future strategic plans), the IDEA Committee is responsible for the following:

- Offering recommendations and support for programming and other initiatives that increase access to, and success within, our graduate programs for students from historically marginalized and/or underrepresented communities;
- Offering recommendations and support for educational, professional development opportunities, and training for graduate faculty to develop more inclusive, diverse, equitable, and accessible graduate programs and graduate student communities;
- Promoting graduate student and graduate faculty research and other work on diversity, equity, and inclusion, and the work of our BoR-SREB Doctoral Scholars;
- Collaborating, coordinating, and supporting the membership, leadership, and fellowship initiatives of the James Jackson Community of Scholars; additionally, fostering and facilitating connections between the James Jackson Community of Scholars, the graduate education community stakeholders, and the wider Lafayette community;
- Reviewing and offering recommendations on existing and proposed policies to ensure that they promote the University's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion;
- Proposing new policies that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion within our graduate programs;
- Working to expand resources available to and providing guidance for the Graduate School and the Office for Campus Diversity for diversity, equity, inclusion, and access initiatives;
- Offering recommendations and support for the diversity, equity, inclusion, and access initiatives of individual graduate programs or departments;
- Identifying and supporting the work of partners, while cultivating partnerships between academic entities to build a stronger graduate education community; and
- Calling attention to and bringing forth concerns about inclusion, diversity, equity, and access of historically marginalized and/or underrepresented graduate students to entities responsible for graduate education.

The IDEA Committee shall submit a detailed written annual report to the Graduate Council, containing its general findings and broad recommendations; a brief executive summary of this report shall be shared at the annual meeting of the Graduate Faculty. The annual report will be guided by the strategic imperatives identified in the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan for Inclusive Excellence (and future strategic plans) and IDEA Committee members' understanding and expertise of the IDEA needs of the graduate education community. The annual report will assess the current state of inclusion, diversity, equity, and access in the graduate education community, including but not limited to the work of the Graduate Council (including past and on-going work of the IDEA Committee), the Graduate School, and the University Committee on Graduate Student Success and Retention. This more detailed report, including data gathered/assessed and detailed justification for recommendations made, shall also be shared with the University Committee on Graduate Student Success and Retention, the Office for Campus Diversity, the Dean of the Graduate School, and the Provost.

The IDEA Committee is comprised of members of the graduate faculty committed to furthering inclusion, diversity, equity, and access to graduate education. Members shall be nominated by any member of the Graduate Faculty, including themselves. Membership also shall include ex-officio representation from the Office for Campus Diversity and from the faculty leadership of the James Jackson Community of Scholars.

The IDEA Committee shall include a graduate student representative selected by the President of the Graduate Student Organization; the graduate student representative shall serve as an ex-officio member who participated in an advisory capacity and shall not be asked to take on the duties of the IDEA Committee.

Due to the breadth of the committee's mandate, the IDEA Committee may be led by two co-chairpersons.

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