

Graduate Council, UW Faculty Senate

White Paper – Graduate Committee Formation Policies

Approved by majority vote (15 Yes, 0 No, 2 Absent)

January 29, 2015

Academic Affairs requested that the Faculty Senate's Graduate Council review policies governing the formation and composition of graduate student committees (see Appendix D). This request was motivated by recent faculty and student questions following the Academic Affairs memo of June 26, 2015. Central to that memo and to the Academic Affairs request are questions regarding graduate committee service by non-tenure track academic personnel and by potentially conflicted members (e.g., spouses). This white paper is the Council's response to this request. Rather than limit our response to the specific questions posed by Academic Affairs, the Council chose to broadly review graduate committee policies. We discuss a range of issues with the policies governing graduate committee formation and propose several principles that can be used to guide explicit changes to the graduate rules and regulations. Though we provide several recommendations, this position paper should not be interpreted as providing Graduate Council approval for any specific policy changes. Rather, we hope the Vice President of Academic Affairs will use the principles and recommendations to develop and propose new graduate rules and regulations, which would then, in the spirit of effective shared governance, be reviewed and approved by the Graduate Council with the participation of Faculty Senate.

To generate this white paper, the Council assigned a sub-committee to guide its efforts. The subcommittee included Ben Rashford (Council chair; AG), Gregg Cawley (A&S), Carolyn Pepper (A&S), Mary Alice Bruce (ED), and Ray Tupling (student representative; AG). The sub-committee reviewed unsolicited communications from academic personnel across campus (17 email messages representing 39 faculty and Academic Professionals) and informally discussed the issues with their unit's faculty, academic professionals and administrators. The sub-committee also met with current and former administrators including, David Jones (Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs), Ann Hild (Interim Associate Vice President for Graduate Education), Tami Benham-Deal (Interim Associate Vice President for Academic Personnel and Budgets), Glen Whipple (Associate Dean/Director of Cooperative Extension), Myron Allen (former Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs), and Don Roth (former Dean, UW Graduate School). Lastly, the sub-committee reviewed UW's existing and historical policies (see Appendix A), and reviewed policies at comparator institutions (see Appendix B). Following these conversations and reviews, the sub-committee drafted a white paper, which was then reviewed and revised by the full Graduate Council, and finally approved by majority vote.

The Multiple Roles of Graduate Committees and Guiding Principles for Graduate Committee Policies

Graduate committees serve a myriad of critical roles in graduate education. At their most basic, committees function to guide the student in coursework selection, and degree project identification and completion. These basic functions, however, are necessary but not sufficient. Effective committees also provide students with broad professional and personal support – they help students develop professional networks, they provide guidance for navigating the transition from undergraduate to graduate study and from degree completion to employment, and they support students through challenges that inevitably arise in graduate study, including those of a personal nature. But committee roles also extend beyond the student-centric. Committees must also serve to protect the integrity of degree programs and the university. Thus, while supporting students, committees must also ensure that students meet program and university standards of personal and professional conduct, and academic achievement.

Major professors and committee members therefore must simultaneously serve as teachers, mentors, advisors, and assessors. The success of students and the reputation of graduate education at the University of Wyoming depend on how well committees serve these roles. Given the complexity and importance of graduate committee service, the university needs clear policies that support the creation of effective graduate committees, that establish high expectations for committee performance, and that include mechanisms for addressing dysfunctional committees. Policies that meet these needs must be grounded in immutable principles that all academic personnel, administrators and students support. These principles include:

- i. Graduate committee policies should allow for the efficient creation of committees that can most effectively serve the student and University*
Policies should allow students, in consultation with their major professor, to construct committees that can best support student learning and achievement conditional on being able to protect University and degree program integrity. Creating such committees should not require excessively onerous or time-consuming processes.
- ii. Graduate committee policies should be flexible enough to accommodate disciplinary differences*
Identifying who can best mentor graduate students is inherently subjective and necessarily degree specific. A reductionist approach that specifies absolute characteristics, regardless of discipline or degree program, is destined to be ineffective, both in principle and in practice.
- iii. Exceptions to graduate committee policies should rely on faculty input*
Even with flexible policies, there will always be a need for exceptions to accommodate specific student needs or unique degree programs. The need for, and appropriateness of, exceptions should be judged by the faculty who are best able to understand degree program expectations and student needs.

Thus, the primary responsibility for reviewing and approving exceptions to graduate committee policies should reside at the department/unit and college level while allowing for reasonable and necessary oversight by University administration.

- iv. *Graduate committee policies should include mechanisms/procedures to protect students from mistreatment and exploitation***
Graduate students are amongst the most vulnerable individuals on college campuses. They are incredibly beholden to their major professor and committee for both academic and professional success, especially in cases where the committee controls extramural financial support. As such, students often have little incentive and may be unwilling to advocate for themselves. Policies must therefore provide clear expectations and mechanisms for identifying and correcting dysfunctional committees before they cause irreversible harm.
- v. *Graduate committee policies should have a long-term perspective***
While policies do and should evolve through time to meet changing graduate education needs, they should also be grounded in a long-term perspective. Changes in policy should therefore reflect the presumed long-term needs of graduate education. They should not be overly reactionary to short-term issues, such as rare and extreme cases, temporary budget concerns, or trendy practices at other institutions. Furthermore, policies should not routinely follow historic practices unless they remain useful and appropriate.
- vi. *Graduate committee policies should recognize the professional and personal commitment of serving members***
Serving on graduate committees involves a substantial time commitment. While such service should benefit committee members – through research/creative productivity and teaching experience – it is also important that committee policies allow appropriate recognition of member service (e.g., having non-voting or “extra” members may demean the contribution such individual make to student learning and achievement).

Issues, Findings and Recommendations

1. Clarity of graduate committee policies

Policies can only be effective if they are clearly stated and consistently interpreted. Our review of historical and current graduate committee policies revealed a lack of policy clarity – policies are spread across multiple documents and websites with no single centralized and complete policy document; policies include vague and inconsistent language (e.g., “outside” vs. “external”) that leaves room for different defensible interpretations; policies do not always provide transparent procedures for pursuing exceptions; and policies do not

address all of the reasonable eventualities (e.g., committee rules for emeritus, adjunct or visiting faculty; internal vs. external adjuncts as outside members).

Such lack of clarity is the natural result of policy evolution. Policies necessarily evolve to meet the changing needs of graduate education and they often do so faster than a centralized policy document can be updated. But when this process is allowed to persist for too long, the result is a patchwork of written policies that are interpreted and misinterpreted in the context of individual historical memory. Before long, different faculty and degree programs each have their own unique interpretation and application of policy. If, for example, you asked 10 faculty members what the policy is for non-tenure track committee members, you would likely find that half do not know and the remaining have five different interpretations. Policy documents therefore need to be updated and centralized from time to time, and that time is overdue at UW.

Recommendations

- i. The Vice President of Academic Affairs in consultation with the Graduate Council should develop a single user-friendly document that describes graduate education policies. The policy document should: 1) collate all relevant policies in one location, 2) be presented in a logical format that is intuitive for academic personnel, staff, students, and external stakeholders; 2) be readily accessible (prominently placed on relevant websites); 3) use clear and consistent language; and 4) replace all other existing graduate policy documents.
- ii. The Vice President of Academic Affairs in consultation with the Graduate Council should develop a graduate committee guide to complement the complete policy document described in (i). The guide should serve as an easily accessible reference for committee members and students. It should summarize committee formation policies, define the roles and responsibilities of committee members, outline the rights and responsibilities of students, and answer frequently asked questions.

2. Clarity of committee member roles and responsibilities

While individual programs and institutional memory both contribute to defining committee member roles and responsibilities, there are few currently documented University-level rules or expectations to guide committee members. The basic roles of committee members should require little explanation; however, committee members may benefit from a clear reminder of the basic and broader expectations for each committee member's role. The role of the Outside committee member has, in particular, degraded through time. The dissolution of the Graduate Faculty in 2009 eliminated the 'Graduate Faculty Representative' definition of the outside committee member. As a result the broader responsibility of the outside member to "ensure the process is fair for both the student and the University" has largely disappeared. This broader role provided a mechanism, if imperfect, to identify committee dysfunction. The graduate faculty

representative also provided the student a clear and safe avenue for raising concerns about the degree process. Our review of comparator institutions suggests the importance of an outside member whose primary responsibility is to ensure the process is fair to the student and that the student's achievements meet institutional standards (i.e., quality control). Most institutions have such a committee member and some, to ensure transparency and reduce potential conflicts of interest, have the outside member appointed externally (i.e., appointed by a Graduate School, not chosen by the student and advisor).

Some faculty and programs at UW still consider the broader responsibilities for the outside member, but University policy no longer explicitly identifies or requires this role. As a result, outside members are often chosen without these responsibilities in mind. They may, for example, be chosen because they have specific expertise for the student's project or because they are a collaborator on an interdisciplinary grant that is supporting the student. While these motivations make sense for supporting academic progress, they may not ensure that the outside member is prepared for, and capable of, serving the broader University-level role.

Recommendations

- iii. Consider re-instituting the broader responsibilities of the outside committee member. Specifically, policies should clearly state that the outside member, in addition to providing academic support, also serves the University by ensuring that the process is fair to the student and that the student has been given a rigorous experience. This role does not necessarily require any specific process or paperwork. Simply defining the University expectations and requiring all committee members to acknowledge them (see below) could support the intended function of the outside member. The policies should, however, describe a clear procedure for outside members to follow in the event they wish to raise concerns about a committee. This process should include a clear chain of command for the outside member to follow (e.g., committee chair, department chair/head, college dean/unit director, Academic Affairs). It may also be advantageous to include a summary of the outside member's role/responsibility and the grievance process directly on the Committee Assignment Form.
- iv. Consider specific requirements for those serving as outside members. For outside members to serve their broader role effectively, they must be familiar with University policies and have demonstrated experience in successfully mentoring graduate students to completion. It therefore seems self-evident that outside members should, at a minimum, meet all of the requirements needed to chair graduate committees (see below). The outside member should also not have any potential conflicts of interest with the other committee members, particularly the committee chair (see below).

- v. Consider adding signatory statements on the Committee Assignment Form to remind committee members of their roles and responsibilities. Signatory statements will also help inform students about the roles and responsibilities to which each of their committee members agree.

Examples of signatory statements

Chair/Co-Chair

“I agree to take primary responsibility for guiding the student in all aspects of degree completion, and to provide professional and personal support. I will ensure that the student schedules regular meetings with, and communicates clearly to, all committee members, and will ensure that the committee communicates clear expectations to the student. It is my responsibility to ensure that the student progresses towards degree completion in a timely manner for as long as the student meets degree program requirements and committee expectations.”

Outside Member

“I agree, in addition to providing academic assistance, to monitor this committee to ensure it adheres to all University policies, that the student is treated fairly, and that the student meets University standards of achievement for the degree being pursued.”

3. Expectations for those approving committee assignments

Committee assignments have always been reviewed and approved by nearly every level of administration on campus, including department heads/chairs, deans or directors, and administration (Graduate School dean, registrar, or Academic Affairs). Yet, the expectations for review and approval by each of these representative levels need to be clarified to ensure a thorough review process and to ensure a proper balance between faculty recommendations and department head or dean approval.

Heads/chairs are, and should remain, the most important level of approval for committee assignments. They are in the best position to understand which committee assignments will support student achievement given disciplinary expectations. They are also in the best position to weigh any potential conflicts of interest between committee members. They ultimately represent the first “line of defense” for both the student and the University. Controversial decisions about who should or should not serve on graduate committees can nonetheless place department heads in a difficult position. Passing such decisions along to University administration, however, only removes them from those in the best position to make informed decisions, resulting in either no meaningful oversight or the application of inefficient one-size-fits-all University-level rules.

For heads/chairs to make informed decisions regarding committee assignment, they must be familiar with University policy. Having clearly stated policy documents (see recommendations *i* and *ii* above) is therefore a necessary condition. There should also be mechanisms in place to keep heads/chairs informed of any committee issues (see recommendation *xiv* below). In addition to these recommendations, heads/chairs should be consistently reminded of their responsibilities for reviewing and approving graduate committees.

Recommendation

- vi. Consider adding signatory statements reminding the head/chair of the expectations associated with their approval of committee assignments.

Examples of signatory statements

“By signing below I acknowledge that I have reviewed the proposed committee to ensure it conforms with University policy, has considered any potential conflicts of interest, and is capable of guiding the student to degree completion and assessing student academic achievement relative to the degree being pursued.

4. Graduate student roles, responsibilities and rights

Current graduate education resources and policy documents provide little clear guidance on the roles, responsibilities and rights of graduate students, particularly as they pertain to graduate committee formation and function. Students, for example, could easily interpret some of the current policy language as implying that they have little say in the formation of their graduate committee: “A student’s graduate committee is appointed by the college dean and is based on the recommendation of the department or division chair or head.” Additionally, though current regulations describe a “Petitions and Appeals” process, the steps for this process are vague and the applicability of this process to different student concerns is unclear (e.g., do they use this process to raise concerns about committee dysfunction?). The lack of clear roles, responsibilities, rights, and processes for raising concerns fails to properly encourage students to take control of their graduate education and leaves them overly vulnerable to mismanagement.

Recommendations

- vii. The Vice President of Academic Affairs in consultation with the Graduate Council should develop clear language to be included in the graduate regulations and policies regarding graduate student roles, responsibilities and rights.
- viii. The Vice President of Academic Affairs in consultation with the Graduate Council should develop and prominently display a clear set of procedures that graduate students can use to raise concerns. Such procedures should include a clear hierarchy of contacts for students to follow (e.g., Major Professor, Outside Member, Head/Chair, Dean/Director, Academic Affairs).

5. Non-tenure track personnel service on graduate committees

For committees to effectively serve the myriad of roles described above, they must be composed of individuals that have the appropriate qualifications and experience. Yet, the definition of “appropriate” can be elusive. Differences across degree programs and across job descriptions of academic personnel make it difficult to identify a simple set of criteria for determining allowed committee membership. Despite these differences, a few principles seem clear:

- a) Students should have the flexibility to construct committees that are best able to support their academic and professional achievement, as long as the committee members are qualified to support and evaluate that achievement.
- b) Job titles are generally insufficient for identifying the qualifications of academic personnel with respect to graduate committee service. UW, for example, has many academic professionals that are fully qualified to contribute to graduate education and in many cases are uniquely qualified to guide graduate student research/creative projects.
- c) Committee chairs should have the appropriate terminal degree (or demonstrated substitutable experience) within their discipline.
- d) A majority of committee members should hold a terminal degree within their discipline (or have demonstrated substitutable experience); however, policies should allow for exceptions to this principle in unique cases.
- e) A majority of committee members should be UW academic personnel.
- f) All of a student’s required committee members (currently three for master’s and five for doctoral) should have employment contracts that can reasonably be expected to extend through the students term. Committee involvement by academic personnel with short-term or non-extended term appointments should therefore be considered carefully.

Recommendations

- ix. The Vice President of Academic Affairs, in consultation with the Graduate Council, should develop transparent policies that provide a clear mechanism to identify which academic personnel can serve on graduate committees and in what roles. Such policies should be consistent with the principles outlined above.

Our review of historical UW policies and policies at comparator institutions suggests a few options that could be effective at UW. These options are meant to provide a framework for continued campus-wide discussion; they are not intended to be fully fleshed out or mutually exclusive policy options. Additionally, no policy can be expected to account for all reasonable possibilities or to be fully robust across the variety of degree programs offered by UW. Whatever framework is selected, there must be flexibility to allow for exceptions as recommended by department heads/chairs and college deans/directors.

A. Graduate Faculty Designation

Returning to a Graduate Faculty designation system could provide a relatively simple (and culturally familiar) mechanism to allow graduate committee composition consistent with the principles above. Such designation systems are also common at comparator institutions; with 23 of 30 institutions in our review (see Appendix B) having some type of graduate faculty designation. Academic personnel with graduate faculty designation would be allowed to serve in any capacity on graduate committees. To provide an equitable and inclusive mechanism, the following academic personnel should be eligible for said designation: 1) all tenured/tenure track faculty, and 2) extended term academic professionals with appropriate degrees and a demonstrated record of research/creative activity. Additional rules for committee composition could further expand the ability of uniquely qualified academic personnel to serve on graduate committees. An example of such rules follows:

Committee Role	Eligibility (Master’s)	Eligibility (Doctoral)
Chair	Graduate Faculty	Graduate Faculty
Co-Chair	i. Graduate Faculty ii. Non-graduate faculty w/case-by-case approval	i. Graduate Faculty ii. Non-graduate faculty w/case-by-case approval
Outside Member	Graduate Faculty	Graduate Faculty
Required Member	i. Graduate Faculty ii. Non-graduate faculty ¹	i. Graduate Faculty ii. Non-graduate faculty ¹

¹ Academic personnel without graduate faculty status may serve as a required member on a graduate committee; however, the majority of the voting members on a graduate committee must come from the ranks of the Graduate Faculty.

This graduate faculty approach has the benefit of being relatively simple, widely inclusive, and culturally acceptable (i.e., similar to historic policies). On the other hand, it would require a mechanism for nominating, approving, and reviewing graduate faculty, and a mechanism and resources for tracking approved graduate faculty.

B. Tiered Graduate Faculty Designation

Many comparator institutions have a “tiered” graduate faculty designation system. A tiered system allows different types of academic personnel to achieve specific tiers of graduate faculty status, where each tier has different allowed roles on graduate committees. This approach has the advantage of offering a transparent means by which academic personnel can contribute to graduate committee service at a level consistent with their qualifications/experience. It also provides an equitable overarching

structure to protect the integrity of degree programs. On the other hand, a tiered approach would require a more complex initiation process, more detailed record keeping, and a more significant change in institutional culture.

A coarse outline for a tiered graduate faculty designation system is as follows:

	Committee Roles	Eligibility
Tier 1	Can serve as Chair, Member or Outside Member on any graduate committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Tenured/tenure-track faculty ii. Extended term Academic Professionals with 1) appropriate terminal degree and 2) demonstrated record of research/creative activity
Tier 2	Can serve as Co-Chair or Member	Extended term Academic Professionals with 1) non-terminal degree and 2) demonstrated record of research/creative activity or specific disciplinary expertise
Tier 3	Can serve as Member on a case-by-case basis	Non-extended term Academic Professionals and other non-tenure track faculty appointments

A procedure to approve tier status would need to be developed and implemented campus wide. A variety of approval processes are used at comparator institutions, including explicit voting procedures at the department level or approval by the Graduate Council. Whatever process is ultimately selected, the primary responsibility for nominating/assigning tier status should reside at the department and college levels. Lists of academic personnel by tier status would need to be maintained by departments/programs and provided to Academic Affairs/Registrar. The tier status of academic personnel would also need to be prominently advertised (e.g., on department and university web sites) to guide committee composition decisions.

C. Current Policy with Additional Guidelines for Non-Tenure Track Personnel

Current policy provides a general framework for committee assignments but lacks clarity and is overly restrictive with respect to non-tenure track academic personnel (relative to the principles described above). A starting point for clarifying and resolving outstanding issues with the current

policy could be to follow the general framework in the tiered system above, but require case-by-case approval of non-tenure track academic personnel. Guidelines for approving case-by-case appointments would need to specify that certain types of non-tenure track personnel are allowed to serve on and in some cases chair graduate committees (similar to the eligibility guidelines in the tiered status above).

Within any of the general systems described above, graduate committee policies must also clarify the committee roles for other types of academic personnel, including clinical faculty, research faculty, visiting faculty, and Post Docs. Most of these personnel can be described as non-tenure or non-extended term track (see Appendix C for UW employee classifications). Graduate committees may benefit from the expertise provided by these personnel types; however, current policy lacks clarity with respect to how such expertise can be included on committees. Rather than describe explicit policies for each personnel class, we suggest that principles (a) – (g) above should be used to guide policies regarding the service of non-tenure/non-extended term personnel on graduate committees. Thus, to be consistent with principle (a), policies should allow for the *possibility* of non-tenure/non-extended term track personnel serving on graduate committees if such service supports student academic achievement. However, to be consistent with principle (g), personnel with short-term contracts should be carefully considered with respect to service as one of the required committee members.

In addition to clarifying the roles for different types of non-tenure/non-extended term personnel, there is a need for additional clarification with respect to the service of external (non-UW) committee members. Any such policies would also be consistent with the principles above. For example, a PhD committee with four UW personnel could include an approved external member as the fifth required committee member and be consistent with the principles above.

Similarly, policies need to clarify the potential roles of emeritus faculty and of adjunct faculty (both internal and external adjuncts), and to define committee procedures for cases when an approved committee member retires or otherwise leaves the university. Again, such policies should be consistent with the principles above and should minimize disruptions of student progress.

6. Conflicts of interest between committee members

Conflicts of interest between committee members can degrade the integrity of graduate education. Conflicts of interest arise when potential professional gains, financial gains, or personal relationships could influence or be perceived as influencing the behavior or voting of a committee member. Examples of possibly conflicted committee members include co-investigators on grants that fund the student's project, external members from industry with financial ties to the project, or members who are personally related to one another. We should avoid such conflicts of interest as a matter of course. Yet, we have to recognize that in many cases, committee members with a potential conflict of interest are indeed

the best people to mentor a specific student and to evaluate the student's academic achievement. In the vast majority of cases, 'conflicted' members serving on committees do so with the highest standards of professionalism and in the best interest of the student. It therefore seems self-evident that a policy wholly restricting co-investigators, industry experts, spouses/partners, or similarly 'conflicted' faculty from serving on graduate committees together could do more harm than good – it would deny students the ability to gain from the expertise of all UW's qualified academic personnel in order to protect against the low chance of conflicts.

Historically, the UW policy has specifically emphasized the possible conflict of interest between spouses serving on graduate committees. As the number of spouses and domestic partners on campus has risen, this blanket rule seems anachronistic. Indeed, our examination of comparator institutions revealed no instances of written policies mentioning conflicts of interests from spouses serving together on committees.

On the other hand, committees composed of 'conflicted' members, even if they faithfully uphold their professional responsibilities to the student and University can still project a perception of inequity. The University has the responsibility to protect the reputation of its graduate degrees from such a perception. The role of the outside committee member is particularly sensitive to consider as this member serves as a check on the overall process and an outside source of counsel for a student perceiving unfair treatment from the committee chair or department. We recommend a process whereby committee members are reminded of the possible adverse effects of conflicts of interest prior to assuming these roles.

Other problems can arise on committees where conflicts, personal or professional, between two members adversely affect the functioning of the committee, the progress of the student, or the perception of fairness of the process. Such situations may be unforeseeable at the time the committee is formed. Clear processes for changing committee membership should therefore also be available.

Recommendation

- x. Maintain some version of the University's long-standing recommendation to avoid clear conflicts of interest on graduate committees. For example:
“Potential conflicts of interest, whether professional, financial, or personal, that could influence or be perceived to influence a member's ability to objectively mentor and evaluate the student should be considered when making committee appointments. Appointments with conflicts of interest should only be made in unusual cases when the committee, student, and unit director all agree that such an appointment is necessary to serve the student's academic and professional interests.
- xi. Consider adding a signatory statement reminding each committee member and the student to consider any potential conflicts of interest.

Examples of signatory statements

“We (the undersigned committee) have conferred with one another and with the student regarding any potential conflicts of interest between committee members. We agree that this committee can manage any such conflicts in a manner that serves the student’s needs and protects the University’s interests.

- xii. Consider a policy restricting outside members from having clear (e.g., significant others) conflicts of interests with the committee chair. If the outside member is required to serve the broader purposes described above (i.e., monitoring the process and protecting degree/University integrity), then there must be no actual or perceived conflicts of interest for this critical committee member. Thus, the outside member should not have a significant personal relationship with the other committee members or stand to gain financially from a particular outcome.

7. Timeline for committee assignment

Examples of so-called “dysfunctional” committees are often not the result of actual committee conflict but instead are the result of not forming committees in a timely manner. There are currently no explicit and enforceable policies regarding the timeline for completing committee assignments. An appropriate timeline for assigning committee members likely varies across degree programs; however, identifying and enforcing a timeline (even if they need to be degree specific) would benefit both students and faculty.

Recommendations

- xiii. Consider specifying deadlines for students to complete committee assignment forms. Such deadlines might be the ‘first day of the second semester’ for master’s programs and the ‘first day of the fourth semester’ for doctoral programs, though flexibility to accommodate specific degree program schedules may require adjustments in these recommended deadlines.
- xiv. Consider instituting automated notification from the Office of the Registrar whenever a student does not meet the recommended deadlines for filing the committee assignment form. Optimally, the automated notification would be sent to the student, their advisor, and the unit head/chair (or director in the case of interdisciplinary programs).
- xv. Consider instituting registration holds for students that grossly exceed the recommended deadline for filing the committee assignment form. The determination of “grossly exceed” may need to be degree program specific, but the deadline for instituting a registration hold should be early enough in a student’s degree program to allow for appropriate corrections and late enough so as to not unduly burden student progress.

Appendix A

Current and Historical Graduate Committee Formation Policies

The graduate regulations governing graduate committees have, like most policies, evolved through time. Below we summarize policies from three time periods: 1) Graduate School (pre-2010, prior to Graduate School elimination); 2) Post Graduate School (2010-2015); and 3) Current (as of June 2015). We focus on policies pertaining to committee composition (i.e., who can serve on graduate committees and in what roles).

1. *Graduate School (Pre-2010)* [2007-2008 Graduate School Regulations and Policies, and 2008-2009 & 2009-2010 Graduate Bulletin]

The policies in place prior to the elimination of the Graduate School were recorded on the Registrar's website (in the graduate "Regulations and Policies" section of the online bulletin), and in the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 Graduate Bulletins. Policies regarding graduate committee composition were compiled under the heading "Graduate Committee" (p. 25 of the last printed Bulletin). These policies defined committee composition relative to Graduate Faculty status:

"All committees will have at least one member of the UW Graduate Faculty from the appropriate department/division as chairperson and a member of the UW Graduate Faculty from outside the major department/division. The person outside the major department/division serves as the Graduate Faculty Representative."

The policy further clarifies the number of members for both master's (and Education specialist) and doctoral committees:

"The master's graduate committee consists of at least a member of the UW Graduate Faculty from the appropriate department/division as chair (the major professor) and a member of the UW Graduate Faculty from outside the major department/division. Master's degree committees require a minimum of three members."

"Educational specialist committees consist of at least a member of the Graduate Faculty from that same department, and a member of the Graduate Faculty from outside the major department."

"Doctoral committees will consist of at least five members, including the major professor (the committee chair). Not fewer than three members will be from the major department/division. The major professor (committee chair) and the outside member must be members of the Graduate Faculty."

The Outside Member was further defined as the "Graduate Faculty Representative" and served "to provide academic assistance and to ensure that the "process" is fair for both the student and the university." The definition of "inside" and "outside" members was further clarified by defining a faculty member's home (or inside) department as that for "which he or she is evaluated

for tenure, promotion, and salary adjustments.” The inside/outside designation for faculty members in interdisciplinary programs was determined by the home department of the committee chair (i.e., the outside member needed to be from a department different from the chair). Furthermore, faculty in combined units (e.g., Animal/Veterinary Sciences) could only serve as inside members for students completing degree programs within the combined unit (e.g., the Graduate Faculty Representative for an Animal Sciences student could not be from Veterinary Sciences).

The policies also established restrictions on other committee members:

“Restrictions on members other than the chair and the Graduate Faculty Representative are few. Usually, the members should be tenure-track faculty; however, use of non-tenure-track persons can be made on a case-by-case basis. Qualified non-faculty are welcomed as full voting members of committees. Some examples of non-faculty are: employees of federal research laboratories, public school administrators, and others where graduate-level expertise is required of their position. Ordinarily, such persons should have attained at least the same academic degree as that being sought by the student.”

And policies related to conflicts of interest, specifically those arising from spousal relationships:

“Appointment of husband-wife teams and significant-other teams to graduate committees will be made only under most unusual circumstances and only on a case-by-case basis. Although such teams usually serve with the most honorable intentions, the perceptions of unfairness by either students or other committee members do not warrant making such appointments. Graduate education must withstand the reasonable scrutiny of interested persons. Appointment of husband-wife teams or significant-other teams to graduate committees causes almost automatic questioning.”

These historical policies depended on the maintenance of a Graduate Faculty. Section 4 of the 2008-2009 Graduate Bulletin was the last policy document (to our knowledge) to describe the Graduate Faculty. Most important for this discussion, the regulations describing minimum criteria to be considered for Graduate Faculty included:

- “(1) To be considered for Graduate Faculty standing, a faculty member must be a tenure-track or tenured assistant, associate, or full professor.*
- (2) Before any faculty member can have Graduate Faculty status, he/she must serve as co-chair of a master’s or doctoral committee under the supervision of a member of the Graduate Faculty....*
- (3) Any faculty member assigned to a department that does not have a master’s, educational specialist, Ph.D., or Ed.D. program must apply*

directly to the Graduate Council for consideration for Graduate Faculty status...

(4) Any of the above requirements can be waived for uniquely qualified individuals on petition to the Graduate Council and acceptance by the Council of such a petition however modified by the Council. The Graduate Council shall then make recommendations regarding such individuals to the Dean of the Graduate School.”

Related to the current discussions about committee composition, these historical policies established that:

- 1) The Committee Chair/Major Professor and Outside Member must be Graduate Faculty;
- 2) Graduate Faculty was primarily composed of tenured or tenure-track faculty, though non-tenure track academic personnel (i.e., Academic Professionals, Archivists and Librarians) could petition for Graduate Faculty status;
- 3) Non-tenure (and non-Grad Faculty) personnel could serve as committee members (i.e., not as Chair or Outside Member) with case-by-case approval; and
- 4) Significant other teams were explicitly discouraged and needed to be approved on a case-by-case basis (though no process for this approval is documented in the regulations).

2. *Post Graduate School (2009-2015) [Academic Affairs Memo, November 6, 2009]*
Concurrent with the elimination of the Graduate School, Academic Affairs eliminated “graduate faculty” designation. This decision was based on the recommendation of the Graduate Council. The rationale for eliminating the Graduate Faculty was stated as:

“The traditional justification for distinguishing a graduate faculty is to provide consistent assurance that faculty members who participate in graduate student supervision — especially those who are starting their careers — are qualified to contribute. Whether or not this mechanism was ever effective, I’m convinced that it no longer is. UW’s junior faculty members are generally as active in advanced research or creative endeavors as their senior colleagues. And there is an institution-wide expectation that faculty members in graduate degree-granting programs begin contributing to graduate education as soon as possible. Thanks to their dedication and the mentoring that they receive from senior faculty members, new faculty members routinely prove themselves to be highly effective graduate student advisors and committee members. Thus, as a requirement for initiating faculty members’ careers in graduate education, graduate faculty status appears to be an extraneous barrier. As a mechanism for terminating faculty members’ involvement in graduate education, graduate faculty status is nugatory. In practice UW faculty members who enjoy this formal status relinquish it not as a result of any

assessment of their capacity to direct graduate students but instead by resigning or retiring.”

With the elimination of the Graduate Faculty, the policies for committee composition were revised as follows:

- “1) All tenure-track and tenured faculty members are eligible, a priori, for graduate committee service, chairing graduate committees, and serving as internal or external members of graduate committees. A faculty member’s service in any specific capacity of this kind is subject to written approval by (a) the affected department head or program director and (b) the college dean or, in the case of cross-college programs, the provost. Approval is necessary for each specific committee assignment. Programs, departments, and colleges are responsible for assigning people to graduate committees, for ensuring that faculty members assigned to such service are prepared for it, and for guarding against conflicts of interest, nepotism, inappropriate personal relationships, and other pitfalls.*
- 2) It is possible for non-tenure-track UW academic employees with terminal degrees in relevant disciplines or special expertise to chair graduate committees. Approval of such assignments must be on a case-by-case basis. The employees typically have appointments governed by UW Regulations 5-408 (academic professionals), 7-490 (archives faculty), 7-631 (library faculty), or 5-1 (clinical faculty or research professors); occasionally they may have other classifications. To request approval of such an assignment, the responsible program director or department head should forward the nomination of the potential committee member, including the curriculum vitae and a brief explanation of the nominee’s expertise, to the college dean or Office of Academic Affairs, in the case of interdisciplinary graduate programs.”*

Thus, the 2009 policy revisions represent a shift in committee composition policies and in the oversight of graduate committees. Most importantly, non-tenure track academic employees could now more easily chair graduate committees (i.e., graduate faculty status was no longer required) and the responsibility for committee oversight and for the approval of exceptions was decentralized to the department and College dean. Indeed, the new policy explicitly acknowledged the decentralization:

“Under this system, department heads, interdisciplinary program directors, deans, and the Office of Academic Affairs share responsibility for maintaining effective, rigorous, and equitable graduate committees. Responsibility for the most difficult judgments about these matters should reside at the department or program level, where decision-makers can bring discipline-specific expertise to bear. However, college deans and the provost retain the authority to override decisions about graduate

committee membership in the hopefully rare cases in which academic standards appear to be weak or where personal matters threaten the integrity of the scholarly experience.”

Although this statement implies a role for Academic Affairs in monitoring graduate committees, such monitoring could only happen in the case of a student appeal since Academic Affairs did not collect or review committee assignment forms (except for interdisciplinary programs), which were maintained by the Office of the Registrar.

3. *Current (as of June 2015) [2015 Online University Catalog-Graduate Student Regulations and Policies, and Academic Affairs Memo, June 26, 2015]*

The latest update of graduate policies as described in the Academic Affairs memo of June 26, 2015, clarified existing policies and established new procedures. First, the responsibility for reviewing and approving graduate committees was once again returned to Academic Affairs:

“To standardize the committee creation process, Academic Affairs will now approve all new graduate committees formed after July 1, 2015 and any changes to existing graduate programs.”

The latest policy update also appears to return to the historical policy with respect to the role of non-tenure track personnel on committees. Specifically, the updated policy states that “...non-tenure track UW academic employees with terminal degrees in relevant disciplines or special expertise may serve on committees following case-by-case approval.” The change in language compared to the 2009 policy memo, from “to chair” to “may serve”, suggests that non-tenure track academic personnel can no longer chair graduate committees. Furthermore, whereas the 2009 memo decentralized oversight, the updated policy returns oversight to University administration, with the final approval of all case-by-case exceptions being transferred to Academic Affairs. The current practice of Academic Affairs (though not stated in any written policy) is to disallow non-tenure track personnel from serving in any of the required committee roles (i.e., they must serve as an additional committee member).

The latest policy update also added new restrictions to reduce the potential for conflicts of interest on graduate committees. Specifically, whereas previous policies have strongly discouraged spousal/domestic partner teams from serving together on committees, such service was allowed given case-by-case approval. The new policy appears to remove the need for case-by-case approval and replace it with the requirement that one of the conflicted members serve as an additional committee member:

“Spousal and domestic partners may serve on committees as additional committee members (e.g., an added member who serves beyond the required faculty membership).”

Our review of graduate committee composition policies highlights how policies evolve through time. In general, however, policies regarding who can serve on graduate committees and in what roles have been relatively consistent (see summary table below). Tenured or tenure-track UW faculty have always been able to serve in any of the required committee roles (acknowledging restrictions with respect to inside and outside members). Non-tenure track UW academic personnel have generally been allowed to serve on, and perhaps chair, committees with case-by-case approval. Potentially conflicted members, such as spouses/domestic partners, have always been discouraged from serving together but have been allowed to do so with approval. The apparent current shift to requiring non-tenure track personnel and spouses/domestic partners to serve as additional committee members represents a shift in process but not necessarily a change in principle.

Our review has also highlighted a perennial issue with graduate policies at UW. Within each time period highlighted above, there is a persistent lack of clarity. In each period, some aspects of committee assignments are left open to interpretation. Terminology, for example, is rarely used consistently across time or across different documents within the same time period. Moreover, as policies have evolved through time, key policies have become spread across multiple documents making it difficult for anyone to easily understand the full policy landscape. At a minimum, there is a need for graduate committee policies to be stated clearly and succinctly, and collated into a single user-friendly document.

Summary of Graduate Committee Composition Policies

<i>Time Period / Committee Role</i>	UW Employee Classification			
	Tenure-track	Non-tenure track ¹	Adjunct	Non-UW ²
<i>Graduate School</i>				
Chair/Co-chair	w/Graduate Faculty status	w/Graduate Faculty status	No	No
Outside Member	w/Graduate Faculty status	w/Graduate Faculty status	No	No
Required Member ³	Yes	Case-by-Case ⁴	Case-by-Case	?
Additional Member	Yes	Case-by-Case	Case-by-Case	
External Member				Case-by-Case
<i>Post Graduate School</i>				
Chair/Co-chair	Yes	Case-by-Case	No	No
Outside Member	Yes	Case-by-Case	No	No
Required Member	Yes	Case-by-Case	Case-by-Case	?
Additional Member	Yes	Case-by-Case	Case-by-Case	
External Member				Case-by-Case
<i>Current</i>				
Chair/Co-chair	Yes	No ⁶	No	No
Outside Member	Yes	No ⁶	No	No
Required Member	Yes	No ⁶	Case-by-Case	Case-by-Case ⁵
Additional Member	Yes	Yes ⁶	Case-by-Case	Case-by-Case ⁵
External Member				Case-by-Case

¹ “Non-tenure track” refers to academic personnel (e.g., APs, Archivists, and Librarians) that are not classified as tenured or tenure track faculty (see Appendix C).

² Across all time periods, including a non-UW member (i.e., “External” member) on a graduate committee “does not reduce the number of UW employees required”. The policies, however, are unclear about whether the other required members must be UW employees.

³ “Required member” refers to the members other than the Chair or Outside Member that are required to meet the minimum number of committee members (3 for master’s level committees, and 5 for doctoral level committees).

⁴ “Case-by-Case” implies case-by-case approval from either the department head, College Dean, Dean of the Graduate School, Graduate Council or Academic Affairs depending on the time period and specific exemption requested. During the Graduate School period, the source for case-by-case approval was vague in the written regulations. The head and dean could approve external members; however, there is no indication of who had the responsibility to approve non-tenure track committee members. During the post Graduate school period, department heads bore most of the responsibility for approving committee members, though responsibility for case-by-case approval of none-tenure participation rested with the College Dean or Academic Affairs in the case of interdisciplinary programs. Current policy requires case-by-case approval be given by **both** the College Dean and Academic Affairs.

⁵ The current Graduate Student Regulations and Policies (Office of the Registrar) indicates that an external (non-UW) member can only serve as an additional member for masters-level committees; however, no additional member distinction is made for doctoral committees, which seemingly implies that an external member can serve as one of the required members.

⁶ Though not explicitly stated in any written policy, the current practice of Academic Affairs is to require that non-tenure track personnel serve as an additional committee member.

Appendix B

Graduate Committee Policies at Comparator Institutions

To better understand the broader landscape of graduate committee composition, we examined policies at 30 comparator institutions. Our comparators included the 23 western land grant universities provided by UW's Office of Institutional Analysis augmented by an additional seven private and public universities from the Times World University Rankings (see table below). For each institution, we determined whether they have policies regarding graduate committee composition, and whether those policies distinguished the roles afforded to non-tenure track personnel or identified limitations related to conflicts-of-interest between committee members. Differences in institutional structure and terminology often make it difficult for an outsider to decipher another institutions policies. We therefore summarize below the general patterns observed at the selected comparators relative to terminology and constructs familiar to UW.

First, all of the comparators have a Graduate School or similar institutional-wide structure that manages all aspects of graduate education. Most (23/30¹) also have some type of designation for graduate faculty that distinguishes who amongst the faculty and academic personnel can contribute to graduate education and how (e.g., teaching graduate courses or serving on graduate committees). As a result, most of the policies related to committee composition are described relative to graduate faculty designation.

Two general frameworks for committee composition tend to characterize comparator strategies: 1) decentralized, which is characterized by having few specific institution-wide rules; and 2) centralized, which is characterized (to varying degrees) by having specific institution-wide rules and administrative oversight.

The largely decentralized strategy is rare, and is most common at the private institutions in our comparator list. On the surface, this strategy would seem to provide nearly complete flexibility to departments/programs in determining committee composition with little administrative oversight. However, where there appears to be great decentralization of graduate committee composition, there also appears to be different committee structures (i.e., different from UW) that provide internal checks and balances on both program rigor and student fairness. For example, several institutions that appear to allow great decentralization (e.g., Stanford and Cal Tech) also separate critical decisions from the graduate committee as UW typically defines it. They might for example, have a separate examination committee (i.e., separate from the students research advisory committee), or require that the chair of the final examination committee not be a member of the students advisory committee. This separation – of the student, their research advisor(s), and those voting on degree attainment – would seem to provide strong checks and balances, particularly as it relates to quality control. A chair of an examination committee that understands the university and disciplinary standards but is not personally involved with or financially obligated to the student is more likely to make impassive matter-of-fact decisions about student achievement and process fairness.

More common among the comparators we examined is the centralized strategy. The degree of centralization and administrative oversight varies across institutions but several common themes related to our primary questions emerge:

- *Can non-tenure track personnel serve on graduate committees?*
Most comparators (26/30)¹ have policies that allow non-tenure track personnel to serve on committees. Approaches for allowing such service vary, though most require case-by-case approval (either for each committee service or to attain graduate faculty designation). Many institutions have “tiered” distinctions for graduate faculty designations, which allow different types of personnel to serve in various committee roles. Several institutions also have general guidelines constraining non-tenure track service, such as that the majority of the committee must be tenured/tenure track faculty, or that all committee members must hold the highest terminal degree of their respective discipline or hold a degree equivalent to or greater than the degree being conferred by the committee. Many policies also discuss the need for all committee members to have a demonstrated record of research/creative productivity.
- *Can non-tenure track personnel chair graduate committees?*
Approximately half of the comparators (16/30) appear to have explicit policies that allow non-tenure track personnel to chair graduate committees. In all of these examples, case-by-case approval is required. Many comparators, alternatively, allow non-tenure track personnel to co-chair graduate committees.
- *Who is responsible for approving committees or case-by-case exceptions?*
Final approval of graduate committees or exceptions (e.g., non-tenure track service on committees) generally resides with the graduate school dean or equivalent (23/30). In some cases, a faculty committee (similar to UW’s Graduate Council) must also provide such approval. Most processes, however, also require approval at the department and college level. It is therefore impossible to know whether the final administrative approval is simply a “rubber-stamp” in support of lower level approval.
- *What policies exist to address potential conflicts-of-interest between committee members?*
Though most comparators have policy statements forbidding relationships between committee members and the student, we found no examples of policies regarding conflicts of interest between committee members themselves. Such policies or general recommendations may exist in other policy documents, such as faculty handbooks, but these are typically not available to the public. At least one comparator (Harvard) had explicit policies regarding financial conflicts of interest,

¹ *All of the proportions presented in this section are approximate. They represent, to the best of our knowledge, the number of institutions (out of 30) that appear to meet the condition. In most cases, the inverse – the number not meeting the condition – results from the lack of a clear policy rather than a clear policy to the contrary.*

but it was difficult to determine the extent to which such policies would restrict graduate committee composition.

- *Are outside members required on committees?*

Though we did not explicitly examine requirements for outside members, such membership appeared to be common. Most comparators appear to require an outside member – a member from outside the degree-granting department. The role of the outside member is generally to both ensure that the process is fair and consistent with stated policies, and to provide an outside check on program rigor (i.e., quality control).

List of Comparator Institutions*

1 Colorado State University	16 University of California - Riverside
2 Iowa State University	17 University of Idaho
3 Kansas State University	18 University of Minnesota - Twin Cities
4 Louisiana State University	19 University of Missouri - Columbia
5 Montana State University - Bozeman	20 University of Nebraska - Lincoln
6 New Mexico State University	21 University of Nevada - Reno
7 North Dakota State University	22 Utah State University
8 Oklahoma State University	23 Washington State University
9 Oregon State University	24 California Institute of Technology
10 South Dakota State University	25 Stanford
11 Texas A&M University - Main Campus	26 Massachusetts Institute of Technology
12 University of Arizona	27 Harvard
13 University of Arkansas - Fayetteville	28 Princeton
14 University of California - Berkeley	29 University of California - Los Angeles
15 University of California - Davis	30 University of Michigan

*The comparator list includes the 23 western land grant universities approved by UW's Office of Institutional Analysis augmented by seven leading research universities/colleges from the Times World University Rankings. The additional institutions include the five highest ranked American universities/colleges (Cal Tech, Stanford, MIT, Harvard and Princeton) and the two highest ranked American public institutions (UCLA and Michigan).

Appendix C

Academic Employee Classifications

Academic Title Chart [<http://www.uwyo.edu/acadaffairs/admin/hiring.html>]

Academic Professionals				
	<i>Lecturer</i>	<i>Research Scientist</i>	<i>Extension Educator</i>	<i>Post Doc</i>
Extended term (six year contract after six year probationary term)	- Assistant - Associate - Senior	- Assistant - Associate - Senior	- Assistant - Associate - Senior	NA
Non-extended term (one-year, renewable appointment)	- Assistant - Associate - Senior	- Assistant - Associate - Senior	- Assistant - Associate - Senior	At will No ranks
Faculty				
	<i>Tenure Track</i>	<i>Clinical</i>	<i>Research</i>	<i>Visiting</i>
	- Instructor (before PhD) - Assistant - Associate - Full	- One-year, renewable appointments - Three ranks	- Extramurally funded - One-year, renewable appointments	- One-year, renewable appointments - Professorial rank
Other Faculty				
	<i>Archivist</i>	<i>Librarians</i>		
Extended term (may earn five-year contract if Archivist; six-year contract if Librarian)	- Assistant - Associate - Senior	- Assistant - Associate - Senior		
Non-extended term (one-year, renewable appointment)	- Assistant - Associate - Senior	- Assistant - Associate - Senior		

Appendix D



Office of Academic Affairs

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To: Tucker Readdy
Chair, Faculty Senate

From: Ann Hild and David Jones
Office of Academic Affairs

Re: Formation of Graduate Student Committees

Date: July 30, 2015

In response to several questions and issues received by Academic Affairs, Vice President for Academic Affairs David Jones recently released a memo to reaffirm the existing policies related to formation of graduate student committees

(http://www.uwyo.edu/uwgrad/_files/docs/CommitteeFormation%20Memo_Jun262015.pdf).

Because of additional questions concerning these policies, the Deans Executive Council met on July 21, 2015 to discuss these issues and the clarity of these processes. During that discussion, several issues were identified that require additional consideration. Based on the issues raised within the Deans Council, the Office of Academic Affairs is recommending that some of the policies regarding Graduate Committee Formation be revisited.

The Office of Academic Affairs requests that Faculty Senate direct the Graduate Council to consider the topics listed below and provide input toward reasonable resolutions for the University. We welcome open discussion between Graduate Council, Faculty Senate, and Academic Affairs, and we are confident that this dialogue will lead to the best path forward for the institution as a whole.

- 1. There is campus-wide need to clearly define roles of faculty and other academic appointments as they relate to service on Graduate Student Committees.**

- a. Is there a need for a return of “Graduate Faculty” status designation campus-wide? If so:
 - i. What are the criteria for determining Graduate Faculty status?
 - ii. What should the review process be to obtain and retain graduate faculty status? For example, should this be a department level discussion, college level, with approval by graduate council? University wide criteria with specific additions at the department level?

- b. What are the roles of the following UW academic personnel on graduate committees? (For instance, who is eligible to serve as a committee member, and could any of these chair a committee?)
 - i. Academic Professionals
 - ii. Clinical Faculty
 - iii. Research Professors
 - iv. Post-doctoral researchers
 - v. “Professor of Practice”

- c. Should there be a specific process for designating Outside committee members? For instance, what are the criteria to be eligible to serve as an Outside member, and how should Outside members be approved?

- d. Are there specific forms Outside members should use to report following a student defense...and what office should review these reports?

- e. Should the roles/status of External members (and Adjunct faculty) be different? What criteria are required for External members?

2. Currently, potential conflicts of interest (such as spousal/partner relationships) are addressed by requiring an additional committee member.

- a. Should different procedural steps be taken to identify and address potential conflicts of interest such as fiscal conflicts or spousal/partner relationships?

- b. Should disclosure forms be submitted to specify potential conflicts?

- c. If a student wants to file a grievance or appeal on the grounds of conflict of interest, should the student follow a process that is different from the standard appeal process?

Thank you for your attention to this set of critical issues. We refer the Graduate council to a few documents that may provide helpful examples: UC Riverside committee form (p. 58 https://plantbiology.ucr.edu/graduate_programs/graduate_handbook.pdf); Conflict of

interest form Wayne state University
http://wayne.edu/gradschool/phd/conflict_of_interest_form.pdf and the Professional Policies & Faculty Responsibilities-Conflict of interest (nepotism) at the University of Iowa <http://clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/professional-policies-faculty-responsibilities-conflict-interest-employment-nepotism>.

Academic Affairs will work closely with the Graduate Council as requested to address these issues and to refine the current policies.