

**Minutes of the Graduate Council
October 22, 2021**

Members in Attendance:

Alan Itkin, Akihito Kamata, Elfi Kraka, Renee McDonald, Brian Molanphy, Alexandra E. Pavlakis, James E. Quick, Dinesh Rajan, Gretchen Smith

Ex officio members: Heather Shaw

Members Not in Attendance:

Ali Beskok, Jodi Cooley, Adam Jasienski, Suku Nair (ex officio), Volkan Otugen, Anthony Petrosino

Business:

- **Results of online votes:** Dr. Itkin went through the results of votes that were held online (slides 4-8). The minutes from the Sept. 24 meeting were approved with 12 yes votes, 0 no votes, and 0 abstentions.

A proposal to make Ph.D. dissertation defenses public (see slide 10) received 9 yes votes, 3 no votes, and 0 abstentions. Dr. Itkin summarized the comments from Council members who voted “no”: Two committee members felt that approval by the school dean and Dean of the Moody School should not be required for defenses to be held virtually; one felt that the Moody School should take a more active role in setting specific requirements for the form of the defense.

A proposal to clarify the ways in which faculty who have left their full-time roles at the University may serve on Ph.D. dissertation committees (see slide 13) received 11 yes votes, 0 no votes, and 1 abstention. The Council member who abstained (Dr. Rajan) commented that “we need to decide what changes can be voted on directly by the council and what might need to be determined by the faculty at large. This appears to fall in the latter category.”

- **Former or retired faculty members’ service on dissertation committees:** Dr. Quick stated that he agreed with the comment that most of the proposal up for a vote on this topic was not in the purview of the Moody School Graduate Council, but rested rather with the Faculty Senate. Dr. Quick clarified that the portion that relates to the composition of a dissertation committee, i.e. that the chair must be a full-time tenured or tenure-track SMU faculty member, could be decided by the Graduate Council, but that the portion about what a faculty member who has retired or left the University may do was more appropriately considered by the Faculty Senate. Prof. Molanphy

offered to bring this question before the Faculty Senate Graduate Education and Research Committee, and Dr. Quick thanked him for this. Dr. Kamata proposed that the proposal be reworded to only include the statement that the chair or one of the co-chairs must be full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty at SMU. Dr. Quick agreed that this was the best way forward and said that he and Dr. Itkin would circulate a revised version of the proposal for the Council's vote.

- **Public dissertation defenses:** Dr. Itkin reviewed the original proposal and an alternative version (slide 11) revised in response to the opinion expressed by Council members that the dissertation committee should have more discretion to decide whether a defense should be held virtually or in person. The Council discussed this and agreed that discussion of who decides whether a defense is virtual should be removed from the proposal. Dr. Quick stated that an online vote would be held on a new version of the proposal with this modification.
- **Training about sexual harassment for teaching assistants:** Dr. Itkin stated that two recent cases of graduate students in inappropriate relationships had led the University to reconsider policies related to training graduate students receive about sexual harassment and inappropriate relationships. Dr. Itkin described the way that graduate students who serve as TAs are currently informed about SMU sexual harassment policies and procedures (slide 15). He also described possibilities for additional training that could be provided to graduate students as well as limitations on the possible implementation of this training. Dr. Quick pointed out that University policies are not clear on the point that harassment policies apply to graduate students in teaching and mentoring roles. The Council discussed this issue and the role of departments and different offices in providing training on sexual harassment. Council members expressed the opinion that departments play an important role in ensuring compliance with training requirements. Dr. Quick stated that he appreciated the Council's input and would pass it on to the Provost and his fellow Associate Provosts.
- **Doctoral hooding ceremony:** Dr. Itkin described the ways that Ph.D. and other doctoral graduates are currently recognized at the all-University Commencement and other Commencement events (slide 17). Dr. Quick stated that, with doctoral hooding taking up more time in the all-University ceremony, the Registrar's office was advocating for moving doctoral hooding to a separate ceremony. The Council discussed the way that Ph.D. and other doctoral graduates are recognized at these ceremonies as well as the ceremonies that schools hold for their graduates. Council members agreed to discuss this item further at future meetings.
- Meeting adjourned.

Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies

Graduate Council Meeting

October 22, 2021, 1-2:30pm, Zoom meeting

The logo for Southern Methodist University (SMU) is displayed in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. A registered trademark symbol (®) is located at the bottom right of the letters 'U'. The background of the entire image is a photograph of the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies building at sunset. The building is a large, multi-story brick structure with a prominent central dome and a portico with columns. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow and casting long shadows. Other buildings and trees are visible in the background and foreground.

Meeting Agenda

1. Results of online votes
2. Public dissertation defenses
3. Former or retired faculty members' service on dissertation committees
4. Training about sexual harassment for teaching assistants
5. Doctoral hooding ceremony
6. Other items

Results of Online Votes



Results of Online Votes

Minutes of the September 24 meeting:

- 12 “yes” votes
- 0 “no” votes
- 0 abstain
- The minutes are approved

Results of Online Votes

Public dissertation defenses:

- 9 “yes” votes
- 3 “no” votes
- 0 abstain
- Comments:
 - (“yes” vote) Committee discretion about audience participation is the essential piece that I requested in the meeting. To have this explicit in the text of the policy is great. "The format of the oral examination and the participation of the audience are also at the discretion of the committee, in adherence with relevant departmental policies."

Results of Online Votes

Public dissertation defenses:

- Comments (cont'd):

- (“no” vote) I am not comfortable with "Examinations are normally held in person, but may be conducted virtually with the approval of the school dean and the Dean of the Moody School." There are a couple of reasons for my concern here: 1. COVID-19. This sentence is a disincentive for faculty to chair committees if they do not feel safe with the current lifting of the mask mandate at SMU- which we know based on the recent survey does not align with the majority of faculty opinions (or other COVID-19 related safety concerns). Schools may do it differently, but I can be chairing a student's committee for a student who does not work on my research and it is part of service/mentorship. If its public that means more people potentially not wearing masks. 2. General content related safety as we discussed at the Moody meeting - if a chair and/or student has a concern about their topic creating an unsafe environment due to current events (in a state with very loose gun laws I might add), I would like the advisor, in concert with the student, to have the autonomy to make the decision that a virtual defense makes the most sense. Perhaps they need to document their rationale somewhere but asking for school dean approval and Moody School approval seems unnecessary and overly restrictive on faculty. It also requires the dean and the Moody School to agree when they may not have the content knowledge of the topic/dissertation that the advisor does. I would approve if the sentence read something like, "Examinations are normally held in person, but may be conducted virtually if the advisor deems it appropriate for safety and/or other specific reasons. Advisor should share rationale with department chair."

Results of Online Votes

Public dissertation defenses:

- Comments (cont'd):

- (“no” vote) I believe the Graduate School should be setting up the expectations and standards of the PhD defense and that the format of the oral examination and the participation of the audience are NOT at the discretion of the committee or departmental policies. The Graduate School is the degree granting entity and should take a leadership role on this matter IMHO.
- (“no” vote) I would like the group to discuss the requirement regarding approvals for remote defenses. Many defenses have been conducted remotely, prior the pandemic, because students do not live locally. Psychology, Anthropology, and Religious Studies students pretty routinely are not in Dallas for their defenses. I don't think the deans would want to continually have to approve individual student meeting formats.

Results of Online Votes

Former or retired faculty members' service on dissertation committees:

- 11 “yes” votes
- 0 “no” votes
- 1 abstain
- Comments:
 - (“abstain” vote) I do not have any objections to this policy but we need to decide what changes can be voted on directly by the council and what might need to be determined by the faculty at large. This appears to fall in the latter category.

Public Dissertation Defenses



Public Dissertation Defenses

Original proposed text:

- Oral examinations for the Ph.D. degree are open to the public and announced on a University calendar that is publicly available. The completed Dissertation Defense Announcement form, including the date, time, and location of the examination, must be submitted to the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies at least 14 days in advance of the scheduled defense. The examination will be announced on the Moody School events calendar as well as in the Moody School newsletter. Additional announcements are at the discretion of the student's dissertation committee, in adherence with relevant departmental policies. The format of the oral examination and the participation of the audience are also at the discretion of the committee, in adherence with relevant departmental policies. Usually, the examination will include a portion open to the public and a portion that includes only the student and the dissertation committee members. Examinations are normally held in person, but may be conducted virtually with the approval of the school dean and the Dean of the Moody School. Additional measures to protect the health and safety of attendees may also be taken, and dissertation committee chairs who have concerns regarding the health or safety of attendees are encouraged to consult with the Dean of the Moody School on these measures.

Public Dissertation Defenses

Possible revised text:

- Oral examinations for the Ph.D. degree are open to the public and announced on a University calendar that is publicly available. The completed Dissertation Defense Announcement form, including the date, time, and location of the examination, must be submitted to the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies at least 14 days in advance of the scheduled defense. The examination will be announced on the Moody School events calendar as well as in the Moody School newsletter. Additional announcements are at the discretion of the student's dissertation committee, in adherence with relevant departmental policies. The format of the oral examination and the participation of the audience are also at the discretion of the committee, in adherence with relevant departmental policies. Usually, the examination will include a portion open to the public and a portion that includes only the student and the dissertation committee members. **Examinations are normally held in person, but may be conducted virtually at the discretion of the committee, in adherence with relevant departmental policies.** Additional measures to protect the health and safety of attendees may also be taken, and dissertation committee chairs who have concerns regarding the health or safety of attendees are encouraged to consult with the Dean of the Moody School on these measures.

Former or Retired Faculty on Dissertation Committees



Former or Retired Faculty on Dissertation Committees

Original proposed text:

- Faculty members who are serving as the primary dissertation adviser for a Ph.D. student sometimes leave their position or retire before the student has defended their dissertation. In this case, the former or retired SMU faculty member may continue to advise the student and to serve on their dissertation or supervisory committee in any capacity *except* sole dissertation or supervisory committee chair. If a student has only one dissertation or supervisory committee chair, that person may only be a full-time tenured or tenure-track SMU faculty member. In addition, if a student's committee has co-chairs (in accordance with program and school policies), at least one of the co-chairs must be a full-time tenured or tenure-track SMU faculty member.

Training on Sexual Harassment for TAs



Training on Sexual Harassment for TAs

- There have been two recent incidents where graduate students in teaching/mentoring/supervisory roles have acted inappropriately.
- Graduate students are required to complete the online “sexual assault prevention” training that undergraduates complete. There are currently no consequences if they do not complete the training. Completion rate: ~75%.
- Graduate student workers are not typically required to complete the online training on sexual harassment that faculty and staff complete.
- It is possible to automate requiring the faculty/staff training for all graduate student workers, but not for individual classes of graduate student workers.
- The Moody School graduate student orientation includes a brief presentation (<20 mins) on harassment and University policies by Institutional Access and Equity.
- Not all incoming graduate students are currently required to attend the Moody School graduate student orientation.
- There is no longer TA training run by the Center for Teaching Excellence.

Doctoral Hooding Ceremony



Doctoral Hooding Ceremony

- In the past, hooding has been done by Dean Quick and the school dean at the all-University ceremony.
- In addition, the Moody School held a Doctoral Graduate Recognition Ceremony, usually including a luncheon or dinner, at which each graduate was recognized with comments from their advisor.
- The Registrar's Office would like to establish a separate hooding ceremony to be held before the main ceremony.

Other Items

