



Graduate Council Meeting Notes

Wednesday, November 16, 2022, 11:00-12:30 pm
[Zoom](#)

ATTENDEES: Steve Fetter, Evelyn Cooper, Jason Farman

Voting Members: Helim Aranda Espinoza, Maria Cecelia Bustamante, Debabrata Biswas, Lauren Carter Cain, Eun Kyoung Choe, Laura Demaria, Andrew Elby, Paul Gold, Lawrence Joao Haavik, Lizzie Irlbacher, Douglas Julin, Byung-Eun Kim, Leonid Koralov, Nicole Menkart, Stephen Mount, Paulo Prochno, Yueming Qiu, Jen Schaffer, Edmond Shenassa, David Van Horn, Rob Wells, Patrick Charles Wohlfarth

Non-Voting Members: (affiliated offices): Betsy Beise, Jenae Bonamy-Lohve, Matthew Nesson

Guest Speaker: Jon Malone

GS Staff: Robyn Kotzker, Marion D'Aurora, Fan Tsao, Brent Hernandez, Blessing Enekwe, Patricia Woodwell, Spencer Benson, Waqeelat Gaji

AGENDA

1. Welcome
2. Approve [October 20, 2022 Graduate Council](#) meeting minutes
 - a. Approved, no objections
3. Updates and announcements
 - a. Limits on academic dismissal waivers
 - Graduate Students are required to maintain a 3.0 GPA or are placed on probation if below and have 1 semester to increase to 3.0. If they do not increase their GPA, they are slated for dismissal.
 - However, departments can request a waiver of dismissal for students who they believe can increase their GPA. However, there was concern departments were using unlimited waivers.
 - Now the Graduate School will limit waiver of academic dismissal and require that it is mathematically possible to increase GPA with remaining credits.
4. [International Teaching Assistant evaluation](#): Jon Malone, Maryland English Institute
 - a. [Glossary of Terms](#) shared by [Jon Malone](#)
 - b. Background
 - ITA began in the 1980s due to concerns about students being able to comprehend TAs during undergraduate freshman year.
 - 97.6% Of undergraduate students were classified as students of US States.
 - Studying vs. Teaching requires different oral communication skills. For admissions, speaking score requirements are lower than in other areas.
 - Big questions: Who should accommodate? Listeners? Speakers? UMD has chosen to focus on international teaching assistants and provide support for



comprehension and clarity for their audiences.

- MEI's role in assessing ITAs is NOT about penalizing “accent” or favoritism towards different varieties of English. Nor are they trying to eliminate accents.
 1. Instead, they minimize the perceptual difficulty and maximize comprehensibility. They also provide essential support.
- c. Assessment Updates
 - Rubric updates.
 - Ratings are independent.
 - Total scores near the passing threshold (28) are automatically reviewed by the fourth rater.
- d. Reminders and Possibilities
 - Department representatives are welcome to come and sit in on ITA microteaching assessments.
 - Remote interviews are conducted annually in May for the Fall testing cycle.
 - Teaching Subscores on English admissions tests are important for this process.
 - Coming soon: a predictive study of admissions test speaking sub-scores on ITA testing outcomes based on data from the past two testing cycles.
- e. Questions and Comments:
 - Q1: Could you speak of the need for international students who may become teaching assistants to be tested before they become a TA?
 1. All teaching assistants assigned duties that include face-to-face interactions with students must be tested. All possible ITAs can be referred, but MEI does not recommend it during the first semester since their speaking improves during the semester.
 2. They only test oral communication skills, not reading or writing.
 - Q2: How do we create flexibility in communicative understanding in courses?
 - Q3: What is the cost of the courses the TAs take? The students are not supposed to pay the tuition for the course if they fail, correct? Also, what is the timing for the course?
 1. MEI is a self-supported unit, so it is not fair for the student to pay. The Graduate School does not have the budget to pay, so we ask the department to pay.
 2. The TOEFL speaking subsection will indicate whether the student can be exempted from evaluation.
 3. Remote interviews are available as early as May. The full testing is offered twice per year.
 4. Pre-arrival remote interviews are available.
 5. There are different categories of passing/failing. The categories are Cleared to Teach, Conditional Pass, and Fail.
 - Q4: The background framework could be problematic. The microteaching evaluations could be complex for courses that teach in the target language (such as Spanish or Portuguese). There is also concern over the cost of the courses for international students.
 1. The graduate school has begun offering support for MEI courses.



- Comment: The graduate school pays for the initial ITA exam for any graduate student incoming and has been offered an assistantship.
 - Q5: Is there a protocol for students with speech impediments or other medical conditions?
 1. In this context, they work on an individual basis and work with the counseling center as well.
 - Comment: The instructor should also internally evaluate the role of the teaching assistant based on the needs of the course and professor.
 - Q6: Has MEI received complaints about the professor's comprehension?
 1. They provide workshops for professors, and they can take courses with MEI.
 - Q7: Is the department required to pay for the English course, or is it the supervisor?
 1. No, the department should be paying from the instructional budget.
5. Policy Revisions for Council Approval
- a. [Definition of workload in GA grievance policy](#)
 - **Status: Approved (16/16)**
 - Context:
 1. The original language was vague about the workload, which left room for interpretation.
 2. This revision will simplify the language and provide clarity.
 - b. [Graduate students serving as instructor of record for graduate courses](#)
 - **Status: Approved (16/16)**
 - Context
 1. This year, there have been many requests for graduate students to become instructors for graduate courses.
 2. The new proposed language aligns with policy and the approval process. A co-instructor will be required to monitor. There is concern over peer-teaching-peers and the power dynamic potential. If no faculty is available, the school dean and the graduate school dean can be petitioned.
 - c. [Minimum GPA for graduate admission](#)
 - **Status: Approved (16/16)**
 - Context:
 1. A 3.0 GPA is required for admissions. Propose added language to highlight the GPA will be calculated from the degree-granting institution.
 2. Students take courses outside of the degree-granting institution. The graduate school only has the capacity to calculate from all institutions, only the degree-granting institution.
 - Discussion and Questions:
 1. Q1: Will the process become more objective? Will this change for international students?
 - a. The Grad School team who evaluates international transcripts can equate credentials earned in other countries. This process is not changing.

