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Graduate Council Minutes 2012-11-05

Northern Illinois University

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Sunderlin, Assistant Chair of the Graduate Council, called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m.

Approval of Minutes

Bruce moved approval of the September 10, 2012, minutes; Abdel-Motaleb seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Committee Reports

**Curriculum Committee:** Sunderlin presented the October 8, 2012, minutes for approval. Rossetti reported that the committee reviewed and approved minor curriculum changes. There were various course revisions, several new courses, and a new certificate of graduate study in accountancy. Abdel-Motaleb moved approval of the minutes; Bruce seconded the motion, which carried unanimously. (Curriculum Committee minutes and catalog changes are available at: [http://www.niu.edu/provost/curriculum/committeeminutes.shtml](http://www.niu.edu/provost/curriculum/committeeminutes.shtml))

**Standards Committee:** Buras reported that the committee reviewed a proposed course syllabus policy that was created to establish guidelines for instructors and faculty in an effort to standardize course syllabi. Sunderlin reviewed the proposed course syllabus policy, which was initiated by the Provost’s Office in response to requirements of the U.S. Department of Education and the Higher Learning Commission in correlation with the new credit hour policy. He informed members that an ad hoc committee made up of members from the Graduate Council and the Undergraduate Coordinating Council would be established to craft a reconciled version of the policy. Sunderlin stated that the Graduate Council’s task was to review and discuss the proposed policy and to offer suggestions to the ad hoc committee.
There was an extensive discussion, and several proposed changes were made to the policy. Graduate Council members voted on and approved each of the suggested changes, which will be shared with the ad hoc committee for consideration. (See attached document.)

Sunderlin asked members for volunteers to serve on the reconciliation ad hoc committee. Janet Hathaway (VPA/MUSC) and Amber Rosalez (HHS/FCNS) volunteered to serve. In addition, members suggested that someone from the Standards Committee should serve. Sunderlin stated that a representative from that committee would be asked.

Sunderlin also reviewed the proposed changes to the “Requirements for Graduate Degrees” section of the Graduate Catalog with regard to thesis and dissertation hours. The change effectively removes the maximum number of 699/799 hours in which a student can enroll. The changes were approved unanimously. (See attached document.)

University Fellowship Committee: Sunderlin reported on the thesis and dissertation awards. The most outstanding thesis prize went to Min Kim in the School of Family, Consumer, and Nutrition Sciences. Her thesis was also submitted for consideration in the MAGS competition. The most outstanding dissertation prize went to Elizabeth Bowman in the Department of English. Recipients and departments have been notified.

Announcements

Academic Diversity Program Advisory Committee: Sunderlin informed members that Dr. Diana Swanson, Associate Professor in the Department of English and Women’s Studies, has agreed to serve as the Graduate School/Graduate Faculty Representative to the ADPAC for a 3-year term. Thanks to Dr. Swanson for accepting the nomination.

Presidential Search Committee: Sunderlin announced that John Bruce, who is a graduate student in the Department of Operations Management and Information Systems and the graduate student representative to the Graduate Council for the College of Business, has volunteered to serve as the graduate student representative to the Presidential Search Committee. Thanks to Mr. Bruce for volunteering to serve on this important committee.

Office of the Ombudsperson: The new University Ombudsperson, Sarah Klaper, provided some background information about herself and about the Office of the Ombudsperson. She stated that her background is in law, but she is not an attorney. The Office of the Ombudsperson is a four-person office that serves as a resource to all faculty, staff, and students on-campus. They do not advocate for anyone and all matters are treated with confidentiality. The office is located on the 6th floor of the Holmes Student Center. Please feel free to refer anyone who may need assistance to her office.

Meeting adjourned at 11:06 a.m.
COURSE SYLLABUS POLICY

Students need a consistent level of basic information about the content and expectations for each course in which they are enrolled. A syllabus is a written document that informs students about course requirements and expectations.

Instructors of record are required to develop a syllabus for every course, regardless of delivery method (e.g. traditional, online, hybrid, etc.), and distribute the syllabus to students enrolled in the course in an appropriate written format. The syllabus must be distributed in class or posted electronically on Blackboard on or before the first scheduled day of the class. The Higher Learning Commission’s Credit Hour Policies, developed to enforce the U.S. Department of Education’s requirement related to credit hour definition, necessitates that a syllabus be available for review for each course taught.

Syllabuses vary in format, but all must ordinarily include:

1. Course Information
   a. Course title
   b. Designator and number
   c. Section number
   d. Number of credit hours
   e. Semester/Term
   f. Related lab, recitation, studio locations
   g. Course website (if applicable)

2. Instructor/TA Contact Information
   a. Name and title
   b. Office location
   c. Methods of communication (2 methods suggested, including office phone, email, fax, etc.)
   d. Office hours
   e. TA information (if applicable), including name, office location, email address, and office hours

3. Course Objectives and/or Intended Learning Outcomes

4. Intended Learning Outcomes

5. Course Student Assessment
   a. Assessment types (i.e., quizzes, exams, journals, observations, performances, etc.)
   b. Description of assessment types and criteria to be used when grading
   c. Method of calculating the course grade (i.e. weighting of assessments, etc.)
   d. Grading scale to be used
6.5. Course Resources
   a. Required reading assignments (if applicable)
   b. Required software, equipment including personal response system (if applicable)
   c. Suggested readings (if applicable)
   d. Course packs (if applicable)
   e. Electronic reserves (if applicable)
   f. Course website on Blackboard (if applicable)
   g. Laboratories, studios, and learning centers available for the course (if applicable)

7.6. Course Policies, as appropriate (for example, attendance, make-up work, extra credit, etc.)

8.7. Americans with Disabilities Statement
       http://niu.edu/disability/accessibility_statement/index.shtml

9.8. Academic Integrity Statement

9. Proposed Course Schedule

10. Additional College or Unit Requirements

Exemptions: For nontraditional courses (e.g., theses, dissertations, independent studies, and internships), written documentation that provides clear and agreed upon expectations for the course may be used in lieu of a syllabus.

Use of Syllabi: Information from course syllabi will be used internally and for accreditation related purposes and will not be disseminated publicly.

**Justification:** As described in the first paragraph, the need for a syllabus policy owes to requirements of the U.S. Department of Education and the Higher Learning Commission. The policy was constructed based on the best practices guidelines that the Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center makes available. The Standards Committee considered the policy and made suggested changes, but because the committee lacked a quorum, it did not vote on the policy.
Requirements for the Degrees

Masters

Course Number 699

A student who has formally begun the thesis or its equivalent must register in course number 699 in each subsequent term until the thesis or equivalent is submitted to and formally approved by the Graduate School. Registration for this purpose may be in absentia. In any semester or term a student may enroll in 699 for the maximum number of hours stated in the course description; during a master’s program students may register for an unlimited number of thesis hours. However, only the last 6 hours completed will count toward the degree. If circumstances prohibit continuing progress on the work, a graduate student may request a leave of absence from the office of the dean of the Graduate School. If a student interrupts registration in a course numbered 699 without obtaining a leave of absence, then the student’s admission to the degree program will be terminated.

A student must be in good academic standing, both overall and in the degree program, to be eligible to submit a thesis for review and acceptance by the Graduate School.

Doctor of Education
Doctor of Philosophy

Courses for Which Graduate Credit is Allowed

Dissertation

A student who has formally begun the dissertation or its equivalent must register in course number 799 (doctoral dissertation). In any semester or term, a student may enroll in 799 for the maximum number of hours stated in the course description; during a doctoral program students may register for an unlimited number of dissertation hours. Once a student has begun registration in course number 799, the student must continue to register in course number 799 in each subsequent term until the dissertation is submitted to and formally approved by the Graduate School. Students must complete a minimum total of 12 semester hours of course number 799 for the doctoral degree. Registration for this purpose may be in absentia. The designation of a dissertation adviser should be approved by the conclusion of the term in which a student first registers for 799. A student who fails to complete this procedure will, upon recommendation of the department, have all accumulated hours in the dissertation course converted to audit (no credit).

If circumstances prohibit continuing progress on the dissertation, a graduate student must request a leave of absence from the office of the dean of the Graduate School. If a student interrupts registration in course number 799 without obtaining a leave of absence then the student’s admission to the degree program will be terminated.
JUSTIFICATION: The changes proposed will allow graduate students to self-register in thesis and dissertation hours after they have taken the maximum number of hours. By effectively removing a career-level maximum, students, support staff, Directors of Graduate Study, and staff in the Graduate School will be saved unnecessary steps during the registration process.