Graduate Council  
Mississippi State University

Number: 6  
Date: February 26, 2010


Absent: H. Bailey, F. Coleman, L. D’Abramo (excused), D. Lewis (excused), W. Person (excused), N. Ponder (excused), D. Reynolds (excused), G. Steele (excused), R. Shivaji

1. Dr. Burnette Hamil welcomed and introduced Dr. Karen Coats as proxy attendant for Dr. Dwayne Wise who is on sabbatical this semester.

2. Dr. Hamil asked for revisions to the minutes (January 22, 2010).

   Motion was made by Dr. Juan Silva and seconded by Dr. Kathy Dooley to accept the minutes.

   Minutes were approved by acclamation.

3. University Committee on Courses and Curricula (UCCC)

   Dr. Tim Chamblee submitted the following proposal for review:

   - Modification for the MS in Geosciences - (add concentration and AOCE approval)

   This proposal had come before Graduate Council during the January meeting and was tabled because the wrong proposal had been disseminated via email.

   Dr. Dan Seale made a motion to untable the modification of the MS in Geosciences and Dr. William Batchelor seconded the motion.

   Graduate Council members untabled the proposal for modification of the MS in Geosciences.

   Dr. Silva made a motion to approve the addition of a concentration in Applied Meteorology to the MS in Geosciences, along with AOCE approval. Dr. Batchelor seconded the motion.

   After a brief discussion, Graduate Council members voted and the Modification to the Master of Science in Geosciences was approved by acclamation.
4. Report from the Office of the Graduate School (OGS)

The report from the OGS, prepared by Dr. Louis D’Abramo had been emailed to Graduate Council members earlier. The report contained the following information:

- Two of three MSU students, whose applications for the Fulbright Fellowship were approved by the Graduate School last fall, have received notification that they passed the initial screening. These applicants are now awaiting final notification and approval by their host countries (Italy and the United Kingdom) in March 2010.

- The Office of the Graduate School and the MSU Library are working together to provide graduate coordinators and graduate students with timely information concerning the use of templates for theses and dissertations. Links to the OGS website from the Graduate Student page of the MSU Library website and vice-versa have been established.

- This semester, a total of 474 GAS received a $200 reimbursement for health insurance coverage. I am currently working with VP McGrevey and President Keenum to increase the annual $400 reimbursement which currently covers approximately 40% of the total cost. A total of $94,800 has been disbursed.

- A total of 664 graduate students were admitted for the spring 2010 semester, an increase of 1% over spring 2009.

- For the spring 2010 semester, the average monthly stipend for Graduate Research Assistantships, Graduate teaching Assistantships, and Graduate Service Assistantships is $1439, $1344, and $1029 respectively. There is a total of 1111 GAs, proportionately divided as follows: GRA (56.8%), GTA (30.2%), GSA (13.0%).

- As of February 23, 2010, the Office of the Graduate School has received 1396 applications for the fall 2010 semester, a 30% increase over that received as of this date for the fall 2009 semester. The total admitted is currently 116, a 47% increase over last year.

- The Departments of Psychology and Political Science and Public Policy are now receiving graduate student files electronically as part of the Workflow process. The Departments of Geosciences and Food Science, Nutrition and Health Promotion will move to electronic processing soon pending receipt of forms completed and signed by the appropriate individuals.

- The Bagley College of Engineering, the Office of the Graduate School and the Alliance for Graduate Education in Mississippi (AGEM) will host a National Science Foundation (NSF) Graduate Fellowship Informational Workshop for undergraduate juniors, seniors, and graduate students on Wednesday, March 31st from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm in the John Grisham Room of the Mitchell memorial Library.
• The Office of the Graduate School in collaboration with the Institute of International Education, will host a Graduate Student Fulbright Information Workshop on Wednesday, April 14th in the Fowlkes Auditorium of the Student Union from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm.

• Our AGEM 5th Annual Increasing Momentum to Provide Empowerment to Talented Undergraduate Students to Pursue Graduate Education (IMPETUS-PGE) Super Recruitment Weekend has been set for April 9-10, 2010 for approximately 30 juniors and seniors in the STEM areas from Mississippi institutions and selected institutions from its contiguous states.

• The Graduate Student Association (GSA) Annual Awards Banquet is schedule for the 2nd week in April. Banquet details will be sent electronically approximately 3 weeks from the scheduled date.

• Nomination forms and corresponding instructions for Graduate Research, Service and Teaching Assistant of the Year Awards will be sent to department heads and graduate coordinators on March 1. Information about the awards and nomination forms will also be posted on the OGS and GSA web sites.

On behalf of Dr. D’Abramo and the Office of the Graduate School, Ms. Karin Lee thanked the Graduate Council Appeal Subcommittee of Drs. Dooley (chair), Goodman and Seale for their service in reviewing two academic dismissal cases. Their quick response and thorough evaluation is much appreciated.

5. Report from Graduate Student Association (GSA)

GSA President Beth Rauhaus presented the following report:

The GSA held a meeting on Wednesday, February 24, 2010. Approximately graduate students attended the meeting and the minutes of the meeting have already been posted on the GSA web page. The next meeting will be held on March 24, 2010 and it will be the last regular meeting for the spring semester. Planning is underway for the annual GSA Banquet which will be held April 14 2010, in the Palmeiro Center. Please be on the lookout for a call for nominations for outstanding graduate assistant. The Graduate Research Symposium winners will also be recognized at the Annual Awards Banquet.

6. Old Business

• Graduate Student Grievance Process (Subcommittee Report)

Grievance Subcommittee Chair Dr. Dooley stated that the subcommittee had met once but is not yet prepared to present a report. Every effort is being made to have a draft document ready for the March Graduate Council meeting. Dr. Radha Srinivasan, Dr. David Lewis, and Ms. Rauhaus are the other members of the Grievance Subcommittee.

• Time Limit Document revisited (Handout)
Ms. Lee stated that D’Abramo had taken the document approved by Graduate Council in November 2009 to the Dean’s Council and the Associate Dean’s Council. Both bodies support the document but requested some changes to the style of the document. The substance of the document remains unchanged.

On behalf of Dr. D’Abramo, Ms. Lee asked Dr. Ed Allen (Time Limit Subcommittee Chair) to clarify the omission of the Fulfillment of Provisional Admission Requirements “It is expected that a student will fulfill this requirement during the initial semester of enrollment” in the proposed changes to the Graduate Bulletin. Dr. Allen pointed out that elsewhere in the Graduate Bulletin it states that graduate students in provisional status must fulfill their requirements within the first 9 credit hours. Part time students may not take 9 credit hours during their initial semester of enrollment, so this statement is misleading and should be omitted for part-time students.

Ms. Lee explained that Dr. D’Abramo wanted Graduate Council to vote again on the revised Time Limit Document.

Dr. Hamil called for a motion. Dr. Dooley made a motion to accept the revised Time Limit Document as proposed. The motion was seconded by Dr. Allen.

Discussion followed. Ms. Lee will disseminate the Time Limit Document approved in November and the Time Limits Proposal after Dean’s Council for comparison purposes.

Graduate Council voted and the revised Time Limit Proposal was approved.

Dr. Hamil asked for any new business that should be discussed. Dr. Meghan Millea requested that Graduate Council material such as the agenda, any UCCC items etc, be disseminated no later than the Monday before the scheduled Graduate Council meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 2:00 p.m.

The date for the next Graduate Council meeting has been set for Friday, March 26, 2010, at 1:30 p.m. in 611 Allen Hall.
NOTE: This form is a cover sheet that must accompany the degree program change proposal. The actual proposal should be prepared in accordance with format requirements provided in the Guide and Format for Curriculum Proposals published by the UCCC. Both cover sheet and proposal should be submitted, along with all required copies, to UCCC, Butler-Williams Building, Suite B, 100 Walker Road, (Mail Stop 9699).

College or School: Arts and Sciences
Department: Geosciences

Contact Person: Darrel Schmitz, Ph.D.
Phone: 325-2904  E-mail: schmitz@ra.msstate.edu

Nature of Change: Modification
Date Initiated: 10/09/09  Effective Date: Fall 2010

New or Current Degree Program Name:
M.S. Geosciences, concentration in Applied Meteorology

Summary of Proposed Changes:
The change is to add a new concentration in Applied Meteorology to the M.S. in Geosciences that will be offered through the university’s distance education program.

Approved:

Department Head
Wayne Hunt
Chair, College of School Curriculum Committee
Dale Brown
Dean of College or School
Chair, University Committee on Courses and Curricula
Chair, Graduate Council (if applicable)
Chair, Deans Council

RECEIVED
DEC 04 2009
GRADUATE SCHOOL

Date:
10-09-09
10-21-09
12-3-09
DEGREE MODIFICATION

1. CATALOG DESCRIPTION (current description from the Graduate Bulletin)

Admission—The Department of Geosciences offers graduate study leading to the Master of Science degree in Geoscience and the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Earth and Atmospheric Science. An applicant to the program must have an undergraduate GPA of at least 2.75 on a scale of 4.00 for entry to the master’s program and at least 3.00 at both the undergraduate and graduate level for entry to the doctoral program. The general GRE is required of all on-campus applicants.

Although helpful, an undergraduate background in Geosciences is not a prerequisite for admission into the M.S. in Geoscience program. Applicants to the master’s program in the meteorology emphasis area are required to have passed Calculus I prior to arrival on campus, and the completion of Calculus II will greatly improve the chances of being accepted. All other 130 master’s applicants are recommended to have completed Calculus I.

It is expected that applicants to the doctoral program will have a completed thesis-based master’s degree and have a background in one of the departmental emphasis areas. Applicants from other science disciplines will be considered on a case by case basis. All applicants for the Doctoral program must identify a mentor (dissertation supervisor) prior to acceptance into the program. Some mentors may require a qualifying examination prior to acceptance into the program. Depending on the applicant’s emphasis area of interest, Calculus I and II may be required for admission.

The application package must contain the application for admission; at least two letters of reference; official bachelor’s degree transcript; official transcripts from all colleges attended after earning the bachelor’s degree (both undergraduate and graduate work); and a statement of purpose. An applicant for the Main Campus program is required to take the GRE. A student admitted to the Broadcast Meteorology emphasis area can only begin studies in the fall term. The application deadline for consideration for assistantship funding is March 15.

A Master of Arts degree in Interdisciplinary Sciences (Teachers in Interdisciplinary Sciences) is also available through distance learning. A 21- hour emphasis in Geosciences is complemented by 15 required hours from Biological Sciences; Chemistry; and Mathematics & Statistics in the two-year, 36-hour program intended primarily for K-12 teachers. Detailed admission, program completion, and course information is found in this publication under Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Sciences.

Program of Study/Completion Requirements- The department has emphasis areas in Climatology, Geography, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Geology, and Meteorology (including both OMP and BMP).

Both a thesis track and a non-thesis track are available at the master’s level. The master’s thesis option requires 24 hours of coursework including GR 8542 or GG 8572, GG 8561, a comprehensive exam, 6 hours of thesis research, and a thesis. The master’s non-thesis option (normally for students in Broadcast Meteorology only) requires 36 hours of coursework.
including a research methods course, a research project presentation, and a written and oral comprehensive examination. Both options require competency in statistics or a foreign language.

The doctoral program will include 38 hours beyond the master's and the completion of a dissertation. Written and oral comprehensive examinations are administered at the end of required coursework. A dissertation proposal defense is also required.

The department also offers a suite of distance learning courses through the Teachers In Geosciences (TIG) master’s program as well as a certificate in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) by utilizing DVDs, streamed video, and the internet for course instruction. The TIG program is primarily designed for in-service teachers, and additional graduate coursework in the Geosciences is available to students who have completed the Teachers in Geosciences program.

A student who is admitted in the graduate program in Geosciences with an emphasis area of broadcast meteorology must successfully complete a background assessment test in meteorology. The test will be administered during the spring of each year. A student failing this test must successfully complete (grade of B or better) the GR 1603 Intro to Meteorology course from MSU by Distance Learning before starting his or her initial enrollment on campus for study in broadcast meteorology.

**Provisional Admission**—A student with an undergraduate GPA of 2.50 to 2.74 may gain provisional admission to the program. Provisional students must receive a 3.00 GPA on the first 9 hours of graduate-level courses on the program of study taken at MSU in order to achieve regular admission status. Courses with an S grade, transfer credits, or credits earned while in Unclassified status cannot be used to satisfy this requirement.

**Academic Performance**—A graduate student in Geosciences must maintain a cumulative 3.00 GPA on the program of study after admission to the program. A maximum of two C grades is allowed during the entire program of study, with the student being placed on probation after the second C grade. A third C grade will result in dismissal from the program. A student in the Broadcast Meteorology emphasis area who earns a C or lower grade in the first year of graduate study will be required to take a proficiency exam in the summer before the second year. Unsatisfactory performance on the exam will result in dismissal from the program.

2. CURRICULUM OUTLINE

Only the program of study section is included below. No other changes will be made to the description in the graduate bulletin. Changes in the right column are bolded.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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The doctoral program will include 38 hours beyond the master’s and the completion of a dissertation. Written and oral comprehensive examinations are administered at the end of required coursework. A dissertation proposal defense is also required.

The department also offers a suite of distance learning courses through the Teachers In Geosciences (TIG) master’s program as well as a certificate in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) by utilizing DVDs, streamed video, and the internet for course instruction. The TIG program is primarily designed for in-service teachers, and additional graduate coursework in the Geosciences is available to students who have completed the Teachers in Geosciences program.

A student who is admitted in the graduate

Program of Study/Completion Requirements- The department has on-campus emphasis areas in Climatology, Geography, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Geology, and Meteorology (including OMP and BMP).

Both a thesis track and a non-thesis track are available at the master’s level. The master’s thesis option requires 24 hours of coursework including GR 8542 or GG 8572, GG 8561, a comprehensive exam, 6 hours of thesis research, and a thesis. The master’s non-thesis option (normally for students in Broadcast Meteorology only) requires 36 hours of coursework including a research methods course, a research project presentation, and a written and oral comprehensive examination. Both options require competency in statistics or a foreign language.

The doctoral program will include 38 hours beyond the master’s and the completion of a dissertation. Written and oral comprehensive examinations are administered at the end of required coursework. A dissertation proposal defense is also required.

The department also offers a suite of distance learning courses through the Applied Meteorology Program (AMP), the Teachers In Geosciences (TIG) master’s program as well as a certificate in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) by utilizing DVDs, streamed video, and the internet for course instruction. The TIG program is primarily designed for in-service teachers, and additional graduate coursework in the Geosciences is available to students who have completed the Teachers in Geosciences program. The AMP is designed for individuals with
program in Geosciences with an emphasis area of broadcast meteorology must successfully complete a background assessment test in meteorology. The test will be administered during the spring of each year. A student failing this test must successfully complete (grade of B or better) the GR 1603 Intro to Meteorology course from MSU by Distance Learning before starting his or her initial enrollment on campus for study in broadcast meteorology.

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Six hours of required coursework includes Research Methods (GR 8553) and either GR 8573, Research In Applied Meteorology or 3 credits of GR 8400, Field Methods in Geosciences.

The AMP is a non-thesis master's program, although students may petition the department to complete a thesis. The
department will not approve this request unless the student can assemble a committee willing to supervise the thesis.

Students must complete 30 hours of elective coursework at the graduate level, all of which may be completed through distance learning. The typical program of study will consist of some combination of 30 hours from the following courses. Substitutions may be approved by The Committee.

GR 6303 Principles of GIS
GR 6313 Advanced GIS
GR 6333 Remote Sensing of the Physical Environment
GR 6473 Numerical Weather Prediction
GR 6603 Climatology
GR 6753 Satellite and Radar Meteorology
GR 6823 Dynamic Meteorology 1
GR 6933 Dynamic Meteorology 2
GR 6943 Tropical Meteorology
GG 8203 Ocean Science
GG 8233 Environmental Geoscience
GG 8613 Hydrology
GR 8553 Research Methods in Geosciences
GR 8613 Hydrometeorology
GR 8633 Climate Change
GR 8813 Advanced Hazards and Disasters
GR 8833 Weather and Society

Total Hours 36

Of the courses listed above, the following are included with this degree modification proposal:

Modification to offer through AOCE:
GR 6823 Dynamic Meteorology 1
GR 6933 Dynamic Meteorology 2

Course addition proposals:
GR 6473 Numerical Weather Prediction
GR 6943 Tropical Meteorology
GR 8573 Research in Applied Meteorology
GR 8613 Hydrometeorology
GR 8633 Climate Change
GR 8813 Advanced Hazards and Disasters
3. JUSTIFICATION FOR AOCE OFFERING

Students graduating from Mississippi State with a degree in Geosciences concentrating in Meteorology have been very successful both in broadcast meteorology and operational meteorology. Graduates have found careers with nationally and internationally known employers such as The Weather Channel and the National Weather Service (NWS). Meteorology faculty and students have recently been recognized as the top forecasters in the country. This is compared with other leading programs such as Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Pennsylvania State University. Additionally, distance learning programs offered by the department have also been successful in student achievement. An estimated one-third of television weathercasters in the United States have been students in one of the department’s meteorology programs.

To build on this established reputation, the Department of Geosciences at Mississippi State was approached by the co-chair of a task team with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) seeking to expand opportunities for distance learning in meteorology worldwide. Several courses in the proposal packet would, if approved, make Mississippi State the only institution in the world to fulfill the meteorology course requirements specified by the NWS or the WMO through distance learning. Rather than simply offer these select classes, the department anticipates a need among weather professionals (government forecasters, military personnel, emergency managers, etc) to also complete a master’s degree. In many cases, a master’s degree is required for promotion or advancement, and these individuals seeking to advance cannot leave their current positions to acquire the master’s.

For the past several years, the Department of Geosciences has been seeing an increasing number of military and NWS personnel enrolling in The Teachers in Geosciences (TIG) program. While the program of study does not fit well with their career goals, a Master of Science degree is of benefit to them for advancement. In addition, representatives from the NWS, the Caribbean weather service and the WMO have met with our department and asked us to provide a sequence of courses that would meet the needs of meteorologists and emergency management personnel across North America and elsewhere in the world. These organizations would benefit from a graduate level program of study consisting of a blend of TIG courses, GIS courses, on-campus meteorology courses that would be modified for distance delivery, and several new courses which we are proposing for on-campus and distance learning delivery. Our goal is, with the approval of the AMP, to be able to provide such students with a program of study that will be better aligned with their career goals.

Discussions with NWS meteorologists and representatives from the WMO have resulted in a program that will meet local, state, regional, national and even international needs. Military students stationed at Keesler and Columbus A.F.B have already enrolled in distance learning classes and are thus able to continue their education while on active duty. Additionally, there is a need for NWS meteorologists and emergency management personnel to stay current in the rapidly changing fields of meteorology and environmental science. DL would allow these individuals to continue to serve their communities while advancing their education.
The program modification to allow the AMP concentration through distance learning will not result in duplication in the system. In fact, as it was noted above, due to the combination of courses offered through distance learning, this program would be unique not only in Mississippi, but also nationally and even internationally. Its ability to reach prospective students throughout the world—especially in the Caribbean may increase the diversity of students enrolled in geoscience courses.

Most students who will enroll in the AMP will already be employed, but will be seeking advancement. The benefit of offering this concentration through distance learning will allow students to remain in their jobs while earning the degree necessary to advance. For many students, including the NWS, earning a master’s degree will result in an increase in salary.

4. LEARNING OUTCOMES

All master’s level students in the Department of Geosciences are expected to demonstrate graduate level understanding of course content as well as skills appropriate to their area of concentration. For the AMP, students will be expected to:

- Master course content (to be assessed at the conclusion of the program by a written comprehensive exam)
- Develop an understanding of methodology utilized in meteorology and hazards (to be assessed during the final Research in Applied Meteorology course)
- Master techniques (such as Geographic Information Systems) that would benefit their professional development (to be assessed periodically by internal review).

The program itself will be formally assessed upon the graduation of the first cohort of students by the Distance Learning Oversight Committee and graduate faculty. Quantitative assessment will consist of retention and attrition rates, program graduation rates, and time to complete the graduate degree. More qualitative feedback will be obtained directly from the students at the conclusion of the program through an exit interview.

5. SUPPORT

See attached letter of support

6. PROPOSED 4-LETTER ABBREVIATION

MGAM

7. EFFECTIVE DATE

Fall 2010

8. PROPOSAL SUBMISSION
Included with this degree modification proposal are all course approval or modification proposals

9. CONTACT PERSON

Darrel Schmitz, Ph.D.
Department Head and Professor
325-2904
Schmitz@ra.msstate.edu
October 9, 2009

College of Arts and Sciences
Courses and Curriculum Committee

RE: New concentration in Applied Meteorology and associated course proposals

Dear Members of the Courses and Curriculum Committee:

Enclosed are 10 proposals submitted by the Department of Geosciences for your consideration. The first is a degree modification proposal seeking to add a master’s-level concentration in Applied Meteorology to be available through distance learning. The remaining proposals are for courses that would be included in this new concentration. We are seeking permission to offer several of the courses on-campus as well as through distance learning.

The Geosciences faculty voted to support these proposals during the October 9, 2009 faculty meeting. A motion was put forth by Dr. John Mylroie to accept the proposal packet as is, and the motion was seconded by Dr. Renee Clary. The Geosciences graduate faculty voted unanimously to support the attached course proposals. The details of the vote are recorded in the October Geosciences Department faculty meeting minutes. AOCE has also formally supported the development of this program by providing one full-time instructor position to the department for the next two years. This position allows graduate faculty the ability to develop and teach the proposed courses. After two years, we expect enrollment to increase to the point the program is self-funding.

Two of the courses are currently being taught on-campus. We would like to modify these two courses so that they may also be taught through AOCE. These courses are:

- GR 4823/6823 Dynamic Meteorology I
- GR 4933/6933 Dynamic Meteorology II

Two new courses are being proposed to be offered through AOCE. These courses are:

- GR 4473/6473 Numerical Weather Prediction
GR 8613                  Hydrometeorology

Four new courses are being proposed for both AOCE and on-campus instruction. The three new 8000-level courses below will also be offered as electives in the department’s new PhD program. These courses are:

GR 4943/6943        Tropical Meteorology
GR 8633            Climate Change
GR 8813            Advanced Hazards and Disasters
GR 8833            Weather and Society

Finally, one new course is being proposed for on-campus. This course is:

GR 8573 Research in Applied Meteorology

Other distance learning programs offered by the Department of Geosciences have been very successful. Due in part to the success of these existing programs, the Department of Geosciences at Mississippi State was approached by the co-chair of a task team with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) seeking to expand opportunities for distance learning in meteorology worldwide. Several courses in this proposal packet would, if approved, make Mississippi State the only institution in the world to fulfill the meteorology course requirements specified by the NWS or the WMO through distance learning. Rather than simply offer these select classes, the department anticipates a need among weather professionals (government forecasters, military personnel, emergency managers, etc) to also complete a master’s degree. In many cases, a master’s degree is required for promotion or advancement, and these individuals seeking to advance cannot leave their current positions to acquire the master’s. Increasing numbers of students in these careers have been inquiring about or enrolling in the Teachers in Geosciences (TIG) master’s degree program. While very successful among K-12 educators, the TIG was not designed to serve this new group of students. For this group of students, the new concentration will offer more advanced coursework in meteorology and hazards in a flexible master’s degree similar to the non-thesis master’s degree offered on-campus. The department has been planning and developing this program and associated courses for over one year and is looking forward to the opportunity to offer this new concentration. Please feel free to contact me if you have questions.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Darrel Schmitz, Ph.D.
Department Head and Professor
Department of Geosciences
325-2904
Schmitz@ra.msstate.edu
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Degree Modification Proposal ................................................................. 1.1 - 1.8

Course Modification Proposals to Offer through AOCE

Dynamic Meteorology 1 (GR 4823/6823) ............................................... 2.1 - 2.6
Dynamic Meteorology 2 (GR 4933/6933) ............................................. 3.1 - 3.7

Course Addition Proposals

For AOCE Only:
Numerical Weather Prediction (GR 6473) .............................................. 4.1 - 4.6
Hydrometeorology (GR 8613) ................................................................. 5.1 - 5.6

For AOCE and On-campus:
Tropical Meteorology (GR 6943) ............................................................. 6.1 - 6.7
Climate Change (GR 8633) ................................................................. 7.1 - 7.9
Advanced Hazards and Disasters (GR 8813) ...................................... 8.1 - 8.8
Weather and Society (GR 8833) ........................................................... 9.1 - 9.8

For On-campus:
Research in Applied Meteorology (GR 8573) ....................................... 10.1 - 10.3
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The Graduate Student Association (GSA) Annual Awards Banquet is scheduled for the 2nd week in April. Banquet details will be sent electronically approximately 3 weeks from the scheduled date.

Nomination forms and corresponding instructions for Graduate Research, Service and Teaching Assistant of the Year Awards will be sent to department heads and graduate coordinators on March 1. Information about the awards and nomination forms will also be posted on the OGS and GSA websites.
Proposed Revision to Policy on Time Limits for Graduate Degrees (Approved at November 2009 Meeting)

By Graduate Council Subcommittee: Juan Silva, Doug Goodman, Edward Allen
11/19/09

Current Policy and Motivation for Change

Current policy places time limits on graduate degrees.

- “The time limit for fulfilling the requirements for a master’s degree is six years.” (p.59 BGS)
- “A student must complete the educational specialist program within six years.” (p.62 BGS)
- “After the student begins the [Ph.D.] doctoral program, he/she must complete the program within a period of eight years.” (p.65 BGS)
- “After the student begins the [D.Ed.] doctoral program he/she must complete the program within a period of eight years.” (p.69 BGS)

Non-traditional students sometimes have difficulty meeting these deadlines. Non-traditional students often are employed full-time, and thus, enroll as part-time students for part or all of their studies. Considering the University’s expansion of distance-education opportunities and recruiting of non-traditional students in general, we anticipate that exceeding time limits will be a growing issue. A brief report from the OGS indicated that many students that asked for an extension of their time limit were distance education/non-traditional students.

Overview of Proposed Change

We propose the following replacements to the time limit rules stated above.

- “The time limit for fulfilling the requirements for a master’s degree is eight years.” (p.59 BGS)
- “A student must complete the educational specialist program within eight years.” (p.62 BGS)
- “After the student begins the [Ph.D.] doctoral program, he/she must complete the program within a period of five years after passing the Preliminary/Comprehensive Examination.” (p.65 BGS)
- “After the student begins the [D.Ed.] doctoral program he/she must complete the program within a period of five years after passing the Preliminary/Comprehensive Examination.” (p.69 BGS)

Without further change in policy, we also propose below editorial changes to the Bulletin of the Graduate School to localize these requirements to their primary paragraphs by
removing redundant language, and to remove language that presumes a student is full-time.

Individual departments or programs or colleges could have tighter rules than these.

Discussion

Rationale

We believe that time limits serve a useful purpose in discouraging abuse of graduate programs by non-performing students. Our proposals seek to balance this concern with the need to accommodate the following reasons for extended completion times.

- Part-time enrollment
- Delays in dissertation research
- Hiatus in studies for personal reasons
- Hiatus in studies due to non-availability of appropriate courses

Under current policy, a student who enrolls in one course per Fall/Spring semester requires almost the entire 6 year period to complete a non-thesis master’s degree (11 courses). Almost all distance-education students enroll part-time. All students who are full-time University employees enroll part-time, and similarly, employees in local industry. Therefore, we recommend increasing the time limit for master’s degrees and education specialist degrees.

We have observed that extensions for doctoral students are often due to delays in dissertation research rather than overly extended course work. Therefore, we recommend starting the time-limit period when the student passes the Preliminary/Comprehensive Examination.

Students sometimes interrupt enrollment due to career or family issues, such as pregnancy, care-giving responsibilities, expected business travel, business workload, and change of job or location.

Course offerings do not always fit the needs of students for prompt graduation.

The subcommittee also considered the following concerns.

- We found no regulatory constraints.
- The current scale of extension beyond time limits is significant.
- The policies of peer institutions are similar to current MSU policy.
- Course material and thesis/dissertation topics should be academically current.
- Time limits are sometimes an indirect mechanism for dismissal of non-performing students.
- There is a temptation to exploit research assistants as “cheap labor” for an extended period of time.
We believe that existing policies and procedures have appropriate mechanisms for assuring that degree content is current, for dismissal of non-performing students, and for protection against exploitation of students.

Moreover, graduate degree programs have the prerogative to impose more restrictive time limits.

**Regulatory Constraints**

SACS does not require degree time limits (per a review by Dr. Tim Chamblee).

The IHL Board does not require degree time limits (per a review of the IHL Web site).

We concluded there are no regulatory constraints to revising the time-limit policies.

**Number of Extensions of Time Limits 2008-2009**

The following extensions were logged by the Graduate School, August 2008-August 2009.

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**Notes:**
- Other colleges had no extensions for graduate degrees.
- There were no extensions for Specialist degrees.
- 6 of 11 master’s extensions were for distance students.

We concluded that extension of time limits is a significant issue.

**Policies of Peer Institutions**

A survey of peer institutions by this subcommittee found that most have time limits that are similar to current MSU policy. One peer institution is considering a change to 6 years after the completion of doctoral exams.
Related Policies

The following policies are not proposed to change. They address some related concerns.

- “Once enrolled in graduate study a student who subsequently fails to enroll for three consecutive semesters (excluding summer) must complete an Application for readmission to register again. … Academic departments may set higher standards for readmission to specific programs.” (p.46 BGS)

This implies that the degree program has the opportunity to evaluate whether or not to readmit the student, or to require a revised program of study. This mechanism can be useful when a student has a large hiatus.

- “Continuous enrollment in the University or in a specific graduate program is dependent upon satisfactory academic performance and progress toward the completion of a specific degree program. … Individual programs have the right to establish their own criteria that define academic performance and progress toward completion of a degree.” (p.53 BGS)

This policy gives programs the ability to prevent abuse by non-performing students in a manner that is customized for the nature of the program.

- Policies and procedures for granting extensions to time limits.

The student’s committee is responsible for assuring that the program of study and thesis or dissertation content is current and appropriate for the degree.

- “The student must establish, in conjunction with his/her graduate committee, a program of study consisting of all courses required for degree completion, according to the University-approved requirements.” (p.56 BGS)

- “A [master’s or Education Specialist] thesis committee … will judge the content and style of the completed thesis.” (p.60, 64 BGS)

- “The [Ph.D. or D.Ed.] student’s graduate committee must approve the dissertation topic, the outline, and the final submission of the dissertation.” (p.67, 70 BGS)

Proposed Changes to the Bulletin of the Graduate School (Details)

The following are proposed changes to the Bulletin of the Graduate School in addition to the basic proposal above.

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Proposed Revision to Policy on Time Limits for Graduate Degrees (approved at February 2010 Meeting)

Motivation for Change

Non-traditional students sometimes have difficulty meeting current imposed deadlines. Non-traditional students often are employed full-time, and thus, enroll as part-time students for part or all of their studies. Considering the University’s expansion of distance-education opportunities and recruiting of non-traditional students in general, exceeding currently imposed time limits will be a growing issue. A brief report from the OGS indicated that many students who asked for an extension of their time limit were distance education/non-traditional students.

Time limits serve a useful purpose in discouraging abuse of graduate programs by non-performing students. This proposal seeks to balance this concern with the need to accommodate the following reasons for extended completion times.

- Part-time enrollment
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Individual departments or programs or colleges could have tighter rules than these.

The following concerns were considered:
- The existence of regulatory constraints.
- The current scale of extension beyond time limits is significant.
- The policies of peer institutions are similar to current MSU policy.
- Course material and thesis/dissertation topics should be academically current.
- Time limits are sometimes an indirect mechanism for dismissal of non-performing students.
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We believe that existing policies and procedures have appropriate mechanisms for assuring that degree content is current, for dismissal of non-performing students, and for protection against exploitation of students.

Moreover, graduate degree programs have the prerogative to impose more restrictive time limits.

**Regulatory Constraints**

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The IHL Board does not require degree time limits (per a review of the IHL Web site).

No regulatory constraints that would require revision of the current time-limit policies exist.

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Accordingly, the extension of time limits is considered to be a significant issue.

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A survey of peer institutions by this subcommittee found that most have time limits that are similar to current MSU policy. One peer institution is considering a change to 6 years after the completion of doctoral exams.
Related Policies

The following policies address some related concerns but are not proposed for change:

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**Proposed Changes to the Bulletin of the Graduate School (Details)**

The following proposed changes to the *Bulletin of the Graduate School* would complement the implementation of this proposed policy.

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