Graduate Council Minutes
October 7, 2026

Present: Anderson, Brown, Davis, Ferner, Gebhardt, Lincoln, Pickard, Randol, Reed, Stuart, Wong, Woods, Morris, Hanson, Holmes, Treece

Absent: Holz, Miller, Talepasand

Agenda

Introductions

Minutes from April 22 meeting

Summary of Graduate Council role and responsibilities

- Policies
- Curricular review
- Petitions

Overview of Review Panel processes

Introduction to OCMS

Graduate Petition Reviews

Updates (Woods)

- Immigration policies
- Time to degree reporting

Digital Accessibility (Woods)

The meeting was called to order at 12:02 p.m. Members introduced themselves.

It was moved (Brown) and seconded (Pickard) to approve the April 2 minutes as submitted. The motion was approved with 3 in favor, 0 against, and 6 abstentions.

Summary of Graduate Council role and responsibilities

- Policies
- Curricular review
- Petitions

Hanson provided a brief overview of the Council's three main functions. Woods provided a more thorough review of the Council's constitutional charge.

Overview of Review Panel processes and Introduction to OCMS

Holmes and Morris provided an overview of the curricular review process, the review panel information in the Google docs folder, and an introduction to the OCMS.

Graduate Petition Reviews

Hanson provided an overview of the petition review process. Petition readers for fall term were identified.

Updates (Woods)

- Immigration policies
- Time to degree reporting

Woods provided updates about changes to federal immigration policies for F-1 and J-1 visa holders as well as changes related to federal financial aid eligibility and time to degree. Both of these changes place significant pressure on students, particularly doctoral students, to complete their degree programs in less time than they typically have in the past. He said that programs need to accurately define their time to degree and that this information may need to be published on their departmental websites or elsewhere.

Digital Accessibility (Woods)

Woods circulated a draft document about the federal accessibility standard WCAG 2.1 Level AA that will go into effect April 26, 2027. This standard will apply to electronic theses and dissertations (ETDs), which the campus is broadly not aware of yet; an announcement to students and faculty is forthcoming in the next one to two weeks. Universal design and accessibility are in everyone's best interests, especially our graduates whose work will be more widely available, but this new requirement will be difficult to achieve.

The Graduate School is seeking input from several stakeholders, including the Graduate Council, about this significant transition.

Key Issues, Feedback, and Discussion

- No unit at PSU (e.g. the Graduate School, Library, or Office of Academic Innovation) has the capacity to remediate ETDs for students. Students will have to produce compliant documents themselves; adviser and committee members need to be aware of this requirement.
- It is easier to design a compliant document than remediate it after, so the focus will be on providing students the tools to achieve compliance.
- The Graduate School is working with OAI to create a Word template that will be compliant. The GS is also exploring changes to the ETD formatting guidelines that will assist with compliance. The need for a LaTeX template was discussed but Woods noted this is not currently in the works. Anderson suggested a task force amongst the departments that use LaTeX to explore solutions.
- All parties at PSU need to agree on a single accessibility checker that will be used to determine compliance; discussions are ongoing.
- Conflicts with style guides (APA, MLA, etc.) was raised. Woods stated that style guides will eventually "catch up" to WCAG 2.1 requirements, but until that happens, compliance will trump style guides.
- A draft timeline for the major steps of ETD accessibility implementation was presented and discussed. Initially, students will be encouraged to make their ETDs compliant, and compliance will not be required for graduation, but non-compliance will have some repercussions. Eventually, compliant ETDs will become a degree requirement.

Questions to the Graduate Council

- Is an indefinite embargo acceptable? An indefinite or permanent embargo is exceedingly rare and has never been used in this way before. It would also create a temporary loophole for students who do not want to make their ETDs compliant.
    - There was discussion on this point but no conclusions were reached.
- Is remediating ETDs post-graduation acceptable? This has never been permitted in the past, even to correct minor typos. The ETD is a degree requirement which is why any changes post-graduation have never been allowed.
    - There was a general consensus that post-graduation remediation should be allowed, perhaps via petition to the Graduate School. There were suggestions that both the original and remediated/compliant document should be retained and available. There was also widespread agreement that few students would make the effort to remediate their document post-graduation.

Woods said he would aim to provide a draft policy in two weeks for the Council to review.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:33 p.m.