



Associate/Assistant Graduate Deans Council Meeting

August 27, 2024

The AAGDC Meeting was held on Tuesday, August 27, 2024, at 2:00 pm in CLS 110 in the College of Pharmacy.

Present: Drs. Angela Baum, Ken Campbell, Robin Dawson, Satish Jayachandran, Daniel Jenkins, Michael Matthews, Murray Mitchell, Dale Moore, Ben Roth, Stephen Shapiro, Susan Steck, Angelina Sylvain, Kim Thompson, Paul Toriello, Mark Yancy.

Opening Remarks – Vice Dean Angelina Sylvain

- Incredible 1st year with Dean Vail.
- We will be sending out the agendas at least one week in advance to provide greater transparency on what is going to be topics of interest.
- Please send any agenda items that you would like to share with us.

Strengthening Graduate Admissions Initiative

- Increase in applications this year versus last year.
- Implemented the graduate admissions improvement process in collaboration with the Office of Organizational Excellence.
- Recognized that our current system doesn't communicate with other systems, and that leads to many gaps.
- Will be reviewing criteria processes and workflow
- Will continue with our reading groups. Please contact Cherrie Markey markeyc@mailbox.sc.edu if you would like to receive a book. Sessions will be held once a month.

Graduate Expo 2024

- September 6, 2024; 9:00 am – 12:00 pm; Russell House Ballroom.
- Welcome new and returning students.
- 35+ booths including student service units and colleges.
- Workshops focused on surviving graduate school, GSA Town Hall, and campus tour.
- There will also be door prizes.

Online Graduate Expo 2024

- This will be delivered through Blackboard.
- Available October 1, 2024.

Graduate Student Needs Assessment Highlights

- Survey started in 2022.
- Seeing a stronger shift in mental health.
- The vast majority of students believe that the department was supportive of their scholarly interests.
- Increase in food insecurity.

The Graduate School Updates

- Business Analyst – Oversee technological aspects of new admissions system.
- Director, Professional Development to replace Wright Culpepper's position.
- 3MT training will be Friday, October 25, 2024. The competition will be on Friday, November 8, 2024.
- Graduate Education Summit will be held in January 2025.

Discussion Item – Murray Mitchell – see attachment

- Recurring issue of inappropriate use for incomplete grades. Please share this information with faculty members who are going to work with graduate students.

Next Meeting: September 24, 2024, 2:00 – 4:00 pm, College of Pharmacy, CLS 110

Minutes by Cherrie Markey

Two issues warranting some discussion/guidance from Graduate Directors to Graduate Faculty and Graduate Students

(Fall 2024)

1. Use of “Incomplete” grades.

- a. *Intention*: To be used sparingly when something beyond the control of students interrupts their ability to complete work within a “contracted” course.
 - b. *Abuse*: This mechanism is not intended to be used to allow students to repeat a course—the intention is to allow students to complete a portion of remaining course demands that were interrupted. If there is more than only a minor portion of course demands remaining, other remedies would be more appropriate:
 - i. Drop the course and retake at another time (depending on timing, this may not yield relief from tuition and/or fees).
 - ii. Withdraw for documented, extenuating circumstances.
 - c. *Strategy I*: While the default is up to a calendar year, this is not usually helpful for students as additional course (and life) demands tend to accumulate.
 - d. *Strategy II*: Encourage faculty to use a shorter time span, with explicit expectations for what must be completed by when. Think “contract” and/or SMART objectives/goals to avoid confusion about what is expected and consequences: **S**pecific; **M**easurable; **A**chievable; **R**elevant; **T**ime bound.
2. Providing milestones to help graduate faculty and graduate students navigate completion of a thesis and/or dissertation.
- a. *Intention*: Inexperienced faculty members and graduate students need assistance in establishing norms for progress to degree completion.
 - b. *Abuse*: The minimum requirement for dissertation hours (899) is 12 hours. There are too many cases of students receiving “T” grades (denotes satisfactory progress), for many hours in excess of those 12 hours (e.g., 50 or more hours), without evidence of actual progress (e.g., in some cases, no approved committee, no approved topic/proposal, no ProQuest account reflecting an approved format for a document, no defense date, etc.).
 - c. *Strategy I*: There is no single best way to provide guidance to either “all” graduate faculty, or “all” graduate students. A starting point is for graduate faculty within each discipline to open some discussion as to what might be milestones appropriate to their own discipline and their unique approach to dissertations (and master’s theses) within their field. What is appropriate even within traditional 5 chapter documents will vary widely, but, these will be quite different from multi-authored, multi-publication kinds of documents, which will vary from creative works such as poetry, stories/books, plays, and a host of other approaches to this capstone product.
 - d. *Strategy II*: Regardless of the strategy selected, some level of oversight and accountability has been shown to be helpful on at least two levels. First, students benefit from clear expectations with accountability for achieving explicit goals tied to those expectations (See SMART objectives above). The second level is accountability for faculty members to ensure that they are meeting their obligation to providing this guidance to their students. One strategy that is in use is to require an explicit plan from a student that is endorsed by a major professor to be allowed to enroll in 899 hours.

- e. *Strategy III*: Identify explicit milestones to be accomplished that must be achieved to be eligible to accumulate hours of 899 (or 799 for thesis). So, which milestones must be achieved to be approved to move beyond 3 hours; 6 hours; 9 hours, 12 hours of 899? Likewise, what milestones would be appropriate to be approved to enroll in 1-12 hours of 899/799 in any given semester? Some possibilities are listed below: Again, these are offered as a discussion starter—faculty with disciplinary expertise must participate in determining what is appropriate for their own fields.

Possible Milestones

1. **To advance beyond 3 hours**, (a) reasonable research question(s) and a solid start on related literature must be approved, and a dissertation committee must be approved. Enrolling in 899 hours beyond 3 without these milestones reached will result in grades of “U.”
2. **To advance beyond 6 hours**, a proposal must have been approved by the committee, along with a draft of the document approved for a format check by the Graduate School (e.g., the kind of information a committee is likely to require to approve a proposal: something approximating a title page, table of contents, chapter 1 [introduction/justification]; chapter 2 [at least partial review of related literature]; chapter 3 [methods]; Reference list; Appendices [Application for Human Subject approval; sample instrument, etc.]). Enrolling in 899 hours beyond 6 without these milestones reached will result in grades of “U.”
3. **To advance beyond 9 hours**, data must be in hand, and analysis must have been started (with a draft of results approved by the major professor). Enrolling in 899 hours beyond 9 without these milestones reached will result in grades of “U.”
4. **To advance beyond 12 hours**, a defense must be scheduled, to include a solid draft approved by the major professor. Enrolling in 899 hours beyond 12 without these milestones reached will result in grades of “U” until the final defense is successful along with a final submission submitted and approved.

Modifications would need to be made for students working on a thesis (799) where they are typically required to complete fewer (and more variable) numbers of hours toward a degree.