

Graduate Council Curricular Review Process Overview

Introduction

This comprehensive overview of the Graduate Council curricular review process is intended to elaborate on and clarify the current process for all graduate faculty proposers, college/campus administrators, and staff who are involved in preparing and processing graduate education proposals for curricular review. The Graduate School's efforts to create efficiencies and transparency in the process are ongoing; this overview will be updated to reflect newly developed and implemented improvements as appropriate.

For answers to specific questions about the process that are not answered below or to request consultation on a preliminary draft of or an idea for a proposal, contact Executive Director of Graduate Education Administration Elizabeth Price, by email at erprice@psu.edu or by telephone at 814-865-2516.

Prior to Official Submission for Graduate Council Curricular Review

Procedures vary widely across the University, but in general, a graduate program or course proposal will need to undergo program-specific and college-specific curricular reviews prior to official submission for Graduate Council review. The graduate program head and the college's/school's associate dean for graduate education can provide information regarding required procedures for graduate proposals for any specific unit.

The Graduate School offers graduate faculty proposers the opportunity to consult with the executive director of graduate education administration either before, concurrently with, or after program- or college-specific review but prior to official submission for Graduate Council curricular review (the Graduate School recommends taking advantage of this opportunity as early as possible, and encourages consultation at the conceptual stage of program development as well as review of initial proposal drafts). This consultation is optional but affords proposers the chance to develop the best-possible version of their proposal for official submission, thus improving the proposal's chance to proceed through curricular review efficiently and quickly.

Guidelines for the preparation of graduate program proposal documents may be found at <http://www.gradsch.psu.edu/policies/faculty/progprop.html>.

All course proposals must be initiated in the Course Submission and Consultation System (CSCS), and all consultation on each course proposal must be obtained via the CSCS. After a proposal has been approved through level 7 (awaiting review by the Dean of the Graduate School) and is sitting at level 8 (awaiting review by the Graduate Council Subcommittee on New and Revised Programs and Courses), it is ready to be submitted officially for Graduate Council curricular review. To view a legend that defines the review at each level within the CSCS, see the footnote marked “^” at the end of this overview.

Timing of Official Submission of a Graduate Program or Course Proposal

Official submission of graduate program and course proposals is encouraged throughout the calendar year. Program proposals that first appear on or before the March Subcommittee meeting agenda in a given academic year logistically have a chance to be approved by Graduate Council before the end of the academic year. The closer to the March Subcommittee meeting that a proposal is submitted, the more critical it is that the proposal require little or no revision by the proposer following curricular committee reviews in order to be fully approved through all steps of the review process within that academic year.

Because curricular review committees do not meet in June, July, or August, program proposals that first appear on the April or May Subcommittee meeting agenda logistically cannot be approved by Graduate Council earlier than the following academic year. Complete proposals officially submitted during the late spring or summer appear on the September Subcommittee meeting agenda.

Official Submission for Graduate Council Curricular Review

Official submissions for Graduate Council curricular review are recorded first in the University Faculty Senate office. Proposals should be delivered to the Senate office* for recording only after they have been approved by the college/school dean (or designee); proposals involving graduate programs or courses are recorded in the Senate office and then delivered by the Senate staff to The Graduate School for initiation of the Graduate Council curricular review process.

*All graduate proposal official submissions, except course drop proposals, must be in hardcopy form, as described below:

For all program proposals and for new course proposals that have been approved through level 7 in the CSCS, 25 hardcopies that reflect all levels of approval are required (cover sheets are not required for course proposals; signed program proposal forms are required for program proposals).

For all course change proposals that have been approved through level 7 in the CSCS, 5 hardcopies are required.

Course drop proposals are managed entirely through the CSCS, unless the executive director determines that they require review by the full Subcommittee, in which case The Graduate School provides the hardcopies for review.

Graduate Program Proposals: The Curricular Review Process

After they are submitted officially via the Faculty Senate office, most graduate program proposals (new, change, drop) are reviewed by each of the following groups, in succession, at monthly meetings throughout the academic year (after approval by one group, a proposal is moved forward for review by the next group at its next meeting):

- Subcommittee on New and Revised Programs and Courses
- Committee on Programs and Courses
- Graduate Council

All Council-approved program proposals are forwarded by The Graduate School to the University Faculty Senate office for publication on the Senate Curriculum Report (the “blue sheets”); the 30-day comment period begins on the date of publication of the Senate Curriculum Report. Information on Council-approved new and dropped programs, degrees, options, and minors also is forwarded by The Graduate School to the Provost for presentation to the Board of Trustees.

One exception to the above three-step review process is that program change proposals in which the only change is to offer an existing program at an off-site location (including online) are reviewed only by the Committee on Programs and Courses. After approval by the Committee, the proposal is presented to Graduate Council as an informational item and then published on the Senate Curriculum Report. If any changes in admission or degree requirements were included in this type of proposal, the proposal would require the full three-step review.

Graduate Course Proposals: The Curricular Review Process

Graduate course proposals are reviewed only by the Subcommittee on New and Revised Programs and Courses (not the Committee on Programs and Courses or Graduate Council), although if a new course is proposed in conjunction with a new program or a program change, the Subcommittee-approved course proposal accompanies the program proposal through the next two levels of review as a source of information for those reviewers.

- New course proposals are reviewed by the full Subcommittee at monthly meetings throughout the academic year.
- Course change proposals are sent for review by three-member sub-groups of the Subcommittee on a rolling basis during the academic year as they are received via the Faculty Senate office (i.e., the timing of these reviews is not dependent upon the monthly meeting dates).
- Course drop proposals are reviewed on behalf of the Subcommittee by the executive director of graduate education administration throughout the calendar year; if an issue is discovered that requires the attention of the Subcommittee, the drop proposal is forwarded to the Subcommittee for review at its next monthly meeting.

After approval by the Subcommittee, course proposals are forwarded to the University Faculty Senate office** for publication on the Senate Curriculum Report; the 30-day comment period applies to courses as well.

**Note that the numbered status indicators (levels) for graduate proposals in the CSCS are different than those for undergraduate proposals. Level 8 is review by the Subcommittee, and after approval at level 8, the proposal moves to level 9 (awaiting action by the Faculty Senate office). Any graduate course proposal sitting at level 9 has been approved; the Faculty Senate does not review the proposal, but the proposal remains at level 9 until the comment period ends and the Senate staff update the University master course list.

What to Expect After Official Submission of a Graduate Program or Course Proposal

After a proposal has been submitted officially for Graduate Council curricular review via the University Faculty Senate office:

- Complete proposals are placed on the agenda for the next meeting of the appropriate curricular review group (see above); incomplete proposals may be returned to proposers by The Graduate School or held until all required information is submitted.
- After each review meeting, formal “minutes” from the meeting are prepared by The Graduate School Dean’s Office staff and reviewed by the executive director of graduate education administration, by the senior associate dean of the Graduate School, and by the chair of the curricular review committee to ensure thoroughness and accuracy. The Graduate School uses the term “minutes,” but these actually are extensive, complex comments/revisions/queries about the proposals that provide meaningful feedback to proposers. The Graduate School makes every effort to expedite the preparation and review of this feedback, but protocol dictates that feedback not be distributed to proposers until the meeting minutes have been approved by the curricular committee chair.
- For both program and course proposals, after the minutes have been finalized, memos containing the relevant excerpts from the minutes are generated and sent via email to the proposer of record and the program/department head, among others. For courses, feedback also is entered directly into the course proposal in the CSCS on behalf of the Subcommittee, and the proposer’s response via the CSCS is required.

What to Expect After Final Approval

After final approval (for course proposals, this is approval by the Subcommittee; for most program proposals, this is approval by Graduate Council), courses are added to the University’s master course list by the Faculty Senate staff after the 30-day comment period has ended (if no comments warrant the attention of the Graduate Council curricular review committees). Although the proposal may remain at Level 9 throughout the comment period, the proposal has been approved; no Faculty Senate curricular review of graduate course proposals occurs.

The post-approval path for program proposals is more complex: for new/dropped programs, degrees, options, or minors, after the Board of Trustees' meeting at which the information is presented to the Trustees, The Graduate School notifies the proposer and department head, among others, about the final approval and requests confirmation of an "effective semester" for the start or end of the program, degree, option, or minor. After receiving this confirmation, The Graduate School updates the Graduate Program Management System and notifies the Registrar's Office so that ISIS records can be updated.

When a program, degree, option, or minor is dropped, the Registrar places it in "phase-out" status beginning with the effective semester provided by the program, so that students currently enrolled can complete their degrees but no new students can enroll (i.e., the program does not need to attempt to anticipate when the final student will have completed the program in order to calculate the effective semester; in most cases, the specified effective semester is the first semester after approval, and the Registrar's phase-out manages current students).

^The legend shown below was copied from the "My Course Submission and Consultation System" proposal entry home page.

Level 5 for graduate course proposals is review by the college's or school's representative to the Graduate Council Subcommittee on New and Revised Programs and Courses.

Level 9 for graduate course proposals is awaiting further action by the Faculty Senate staff to publish the approved course proposal in the Senate Curriculum Report and archive it—graduate course proposals are not reviewed by the Senate's Committee on Curricular Affairs.

Legend	
1	New Proposal
2	College/Faculty Consultation
3	College Administrative Review
4	Department Head/Division Head Review
5	College Representative Review
6	College Dean or Their Representative
7	Dean of Graduate School Review
8	Graduate Council Subcommittee Review
9	Senate Curricular Affairs Review
10	On Hold
11	Approved
12	Rejected

**2012–2013 Graduate Council Curricular Review
Meeting Dates and Closing Dates for Submission of Items for Agendas**

Graduate Council Subcommittee on New and Revised Programs and Courses

Meeting Date	Closing Date for Submission of Items for Agenda
September 4, 2012	August 21, 2012
October 2, 2012	September 18, 2012
October 30, 2012	October 16, 2012
December 4, 2012	November 20, 2012
January 2013*	December 2012*
February 2013*	January 2013*
March 2013*	February 2013*
April 2013*	March 2013*
May 2013*	April 2013*

*Meeting dates will be scheduled based on committee members' availability and announced after they have been confirmed; agenda submission closing dates typically will be two weeks prior to meeting dates but may vary.

Graduate Council Committee on Programs and Courses

Meeting Date	Closing Date for Submission of Items for Agenda
September 25, 2012	September 11, 2012
October 23, 2012	October 9, 2012
November 27, 2012	November 13, 2012
December 18, 2012	December 4, 2012
January 2013*	January 2013*
February 2013*	February 2013*
March 2013*	March 2013*
April 2013*	April 2013*
May 2013*	May 2013*

*Meeting dates will be scheduled based on committee members' availability and announced after they have been confirmed; agenda submission closing dates typically will be two weeks prior to meeting dates but may vary.

Graduate Council

Meeting Date	Closing Date for Submission of Items for Agenda
September 19, 2012	September 5, 2012
October 17, 2012	October 3, 2012
November 14, 2012	October 31, 2012
December 12, 2012	November 28, 2012
January 16, 2013	January 2, 2013
February 20, 2013	February 6, 2013
March 20, 2013	March 6, 2013
April 17, 2013	April 3, 2013
May 8, 2013	April 24, 2013

Additional Useful Information Related to Curricular Review

University Faculty Senate

For Senate Curriculum Report submission due dates, publication dates, and other information:

http://www.senate.psu.edu/senate_activity/dates.asp

Board of Trustees

For meeting dates and other information (note: agenda submission closing dates are one month prior to meeting dates):

<http://www.psu.edu/trustees/meetings.html>