

Graduate CSS Committee Meeting – MINUTES

10:00 – 11:00 a.m.

October 15, 2021

Virtually via Zoom

Attendance

Faculty: Mohamed Ali, Wei Cheng*, Wes Lloyd, Eyhab Al-Masri, Ankur Teredesai, Paulo Baretto*, Martine De Cock, Ka Yee Yeung, Anderson Nascimento, Juhua Hu, Athirai Irissappane*

***=not present for vote**

Non-voting Faculty: Raj Katti, Yan Bai, Monika Sobolewska

Staff: Rachel Long, Curtis Black

Absent: Donald Chinn, Josh Tenenberg (sabbatical)

Items

1) Motion 1: Approve Minutes of last meeting: September 22, 2021

Moved: A. Teredesai

Seconded: A. Nascimento

8 in favor, 0 against, 0 abstained

3 voting members absent for vote, but arrived later in meeting. 1 voting member absent from entire meeting.

2) GRE Waivers (2 student cases to be discussed)

In our last meeting, we voted that we would waive the GRE requirement for students on a case-by-case basis. The first case was brought to the committee by Yan Bai. This student graduated from UW Tacoma's School of Engineering and Technology with 2 Master's degrees (one in Cybersecurity and Leadership, the other in Computer Science and Systems) with a final GPA of 3.65. This student has extensive experience, and is currently a commander for the Washington Army National Guard, where he manages ~6,000 soldiers at several varying locations, focusing on cyber security and information. He has a solid understanding of IT infrastructure, data, cloud computing, etc. He took the GRE many years ago and did well, but the score can no longer be accepted since the exam was taken so long ago. Based on his academic performance, Yan recommends to waive this student's GRE and the committee agreed. The GRE requirement will be waived for this student.

The second student for the committee to consider graduated in 2019 with a Master's degree at SET. He took the GRE in 2012 and did very well, but similar to the previous case, we can't accept these scores since the exam was taken so long ago. The committee agreed that given this student's experience with research and academic success, the committee agrees that the GRE requirement can be waived for this student.

In addition to these 2 waivers, the committee recommends that these students attach their expired GRE results to their application (assuming they haven't yet applied), as it could be helpful to get a clearer picture of each student's foundational knowledge.

3) PhD defenses in CDS seminar

The date for Master Thesis defenses is Wednesday, December 8th. Curtis is going to be sending emails to advisors to create a list of students ready to graduate and ready to present.

4) Invitation to grad faculty to present their research in the TCSS598

This course is asynchronous this quarter, but faculty can either present live via Zoom, or submit a recording to the committee chair. Students are very interested in learning more about faculty research, so that they know who to contact when choosing their advisor for projects. Please send preference (recorded or live presentation) to the committee chair as soon as possible.

5) BS/MS Combined Degree

Offering a combined BS/MS degree gives students a unique opportunity to save students time and money by receiving both a BS and MS in just a few short years. This combined degree also gives us the time to engage students early on during undergraduate study, and have them continue to the MS program to assist with our research. Monika Sobolewska has spearheaded this effort, and her preliminary proposals have been sent out to the committee to look over (sent via Mohamed a few days ago). Monika was seeking general feedback from the committee about these materials before moving forward. The committee agreed that this is a good opportunity for students, and that Monika should continue moving forward with finalizing this proposal. Monika mentioned that she is more familiar with the undergraduate program than she is with the graduate, and is looking for volunteers to help her who can speak for the graduate side of this proposed combined degree. The committee was reminded to watch the video/review the documents created by Monika if they haven't already done so.

6) Ph.D. Policies

a.) MS thesis proposal requirement for new transfer Ph.D. students

Important to remember: Ph.D. students need 60 credits to graduate. The committee chair brought forward a potential scenario for the committee to consider: if a Ph.D. transfer student didn't complete a thesis in their Master's program (or instead completed a capstone project), should we ask the student to complete a master thesis proposal? Or if the applicant is a non-student (meaning, someone who is "starting fresh" and isn't entering the program directly from another institution), should we still require that they complete a Master's thesis proposal? Typically, we view the completion of a Master's thesis as an example of research/research presentation experience. The committee chair also mentioned that instead of saying that we should waive this requirement on a case-by-case basis (which creates a lot of extra work/takes up time for the committee), we should try to make a final decision on this waiver.

Some committee members brought forward the idea of finding another way to prove research experience, such as a progress report, a defense/presentation at the end of 1st quarter, or even looking at previous publications/coursework to determine research capabilities. It was also mentioned that it is important that we are equitable and don't make receiving a Ph.D. from our department more difficult for some than others. Another point raised was that as the number of students/applications increase, it will be more difficult to track who does/doesn't get a waiver,

and that proving individual Ph.D. capability should be solved before a student is admitted. Overall, the committee is unsure about this waiver, and a final decision wasn't made. This conversation will continue in the next committee meeting.

b.) Thesis submission to UW Library

The committee is unsure if this is necessary. The conversation regarding this point will continue in the next committee meeting.

c.) Need for a second thesis if thesis is coming from a different university

In this case, students could also have the option of taking a 10 credit 700 research-based course (TCSS 700). We are in need of students assisting with our research, so this could be a great way for transfer Ph.D. students to gain research experience while also helping us, without having to produce a Masters-level thesis. Some committee members raised concerns about this idea, since it is required for a student to write/defend a Master's thesis in order to pass this course, and that it wouldn't be equitable to allow Ph.D. transfer students to receive a passing grade without completing this requirement. The graduate advisor mentioned that the research seminars (590s) could be a better option to address this issue. Ankur mentioned that having multiple standards for students for UW and non-UW students could create more difficulties (such as bias), and that the committee should instead consider creating a non-thesis course to substitute for TCS 700 for Ph.D. students transferring from an outside (non-UW) university.

The committee chair recommended creating a sub-committee to discuss these scenarios/potential waivers, and then bring their findings and key discussion points to this committee and help create a more focused discussion in the future. Wes, Ankur, and Martine agreed to spearhead this sub-committee, and the committee chair informed them that he will be sending questions/scenarios he is struggling with to them as soon as possible.

7) Graduate committee meetings same day as CSS meeting at 10am