

Graduate CSS Committee - MINUTES

21 Jan 2022

10 – 11 a.m.

Virtually via Zoom

Attendance

Voting Faculty: Mohamed Ali, Donald Chinn, Wei Cheng*, Wes Lloyd, Eyhab Al-Masri, Paulo Barretto*, Martine De Cock, Ka Yee Yeung, Anderson Nascimento

**=not present for vote*

Non-Voting Faculty and Staff: Raj Katti, Rachel Long, Victoria Olive

Absent: Juhua Hu, Ankur Teredesai

Items

1) Approve minutes of last meeting: Dec 03, 2021

Moved: A. Nascimento

Seconded: W. Lloyd

Eligible to vote: 9

5 yes, 0 no, 2 abstain, 2 faculty members absent for vote

2) PhD Policies

(a) MS thesis proposal requirement for new transfer PhD students

The committee continued their discussion of policies for transfer PhD students entering the program without a Masters-level thesis/a thesis from a non-reputable university. The team working on creating policies for these scenarios shared their notes on a potential thesis proposal submission process for

these students. The committee agreed that if we were to require students to write a Master's thesis, we should make sure they do so in their first quarter if possible.

(b) Thesis submission to UW Library

The committee discussed the ethics of requiring PhD students to submit their new thesis to the UW Library, with some committee members questioning whether this could create copyright issues. The committee learned that students have the option to tell the UW Library to not make their thesis open access for a set amount of time (i.e. one year), which resolves this potential issue.

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

The team working on drafting these policies shared their ideas on requirements for students in this situation:

- Students coming with a Masters-level thesis into our program should go through a MS Thesis waiver process. This process will begin by students submitting an electronic copy of their thesis (PDF file) to the graduate committee to request a thesis waiver.
 - If a student completed a MS thesis as part of a Computer Science degree from a reputable program, then the MS thesis should count, and we should waive the thesis requirement without a discussion or vote.
 - If the student has completed a MS thesis from a non-Computer Science degree program, or the thesis is from an unknown CS program, then the faculty should review the thesis and vote on whether to accept the thesis as sufficient for fulfilling the CSS PhD requirement.
 - A majority vote by the graduate faculty in favor will waive the thesis requirement for the student.
 - Rationale: incoming PhD students seeking an MS thesis waiver should demonstrate existing research experience in CSS sufficient to waive the introductory research experience that completing the MS thesis provides. If the thesis is unrelated to Computer Science, or is insufficient quality, these students have NOT demonstrated CS research potential and should NOT skip the MS thesis step of the PhD program, as it is critical for their development as scholars

- Reputable programs can be defined as CS programs at any university equivalent to an R1/R2/R3 or M1/M2/M3 university based on the Carnegie classification.

The committee discussed what the team shared, and made some suggestions, such as requiring students to provide other documentation in the form of publications, which could help the committee understand their research capabilities without having to read an entire thesis. The committee also raised questions about how this could potentially impact international students, who are held to different standards. Along with this, it could be difficult to ask students accepted to a PhD program to immediately write a Masters-level thesis. One committee member raised the idea of requiring students to complete a qualifying research project to prove their research capabilities, similar to what UW Seattle requires. The Chair recommended that the team working on these policies work on making the wording more clear to avoid any confusion before presenting before the committee for an actual vote of approval. One committee member on the team drafting these policies requested a quick straw poll to see where the committee stands on their proposals in their current format:

Straw Poll: Keep these proposed policies as written

9 yes, 0 no, 0 abstained

The team will continue working on drafting these policies, and will present to the committee for an actual vote at our next meeting.

3) PhD student funds

We received an email from the graduate school that they might be willing to assist with funding like they did last year, but we haven't gotten confirmation yet. What they did last year: if we fund 2 quarters (SET funds one quarter, the graduate advisor covers one quarter) for 3 students as graduate research assistants, the graduate school will fund the 3rd quarter. Mohamed will send a survey as soon as the confirmation from the graduate school is sent. This is especially helpful for international and out of state students, since they are able to receive in-state tuition if working under this role, as opposed to out of state/international tuition. There currently isn't any solidified criteria for which students can/can't receive this funding, and has typically been given on a first come, first served basis. One committee member said they would share a "scoring sheet" with the committee, which includes 1-5 rankings on various criterion. These might need a refresh, but could be a good start.

4) Combined BS/MS

The proposal is still being drafted, and the team is waiting for the registrar to answer some of their questions.

5) Possibility of offering TCSS 598 in Spring

This item will be discussed in our next meeting

6) PhD Students and taking 1 credit only if done with coursework

If PhD students are done with their coursework, they can continue to register for one credit until they graduate. For masters students, in their last quarter only, they can register for 2 credits. 1 or 2 credits doesn't make a huge difference in the tuition. If for any reason the student is not able to graduate after taking 1-2 credits in one quarter, they will have to take full course loads (10 credits) in all future quarters. This item will be discussed in our next meeting.

7) Evaluation and future trajectory of underprepared PhD students who are not ready for engagement in CS research projects

Some committee members raised concern about some recently admitted PhD students in their classes that aren't showing the right level of preparedness to start their research. Some of them are underprepared, and are having a hard time finding advisors to work with on their research. This committee originally thought they would hand pick students through recruiting/networking, but now students are applying without making these connections, and are entering the program without knowing who their advisor will be. The committee members who raised this issue proposed taking a deeper look at our admission process, to see if there's anything we can do to make sure students are adequately prepared for PhD-level research projects. This will be discussed in our future meetings.

8) Review of PhD applications

This will be shared at our next meeting

9) Documentation of logistics for general exams

A sub-committee was formed, which will be responsible for writing the policies for general exam logistics, which will present their findings at future meetings.

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