

CSS Graduate Committee Minutes – April 3, 2026

MDS 312/Zoom

Date: April 3, 2026

Time: 10:00 – 11:00 AM PDT

Location: MDS 312 & Zoom

Minutes Prepared By: Dongfang Zhao

Attendance

Voting Faculty (13): Dongfang Zhao, Wes Lloyd, Mohamed Ali, Eyhab Al-Masri, Wei Cheng, Ka Yee Yeung, Donald Chinn, Paulo Barreto, Juhua Hu, Ling-Hong Hung, Wei Cai, Zhi-Qi Cheng, Xutong Liu

Non-Voting Faculty and Staff (3): Rachel Crook, Anisha Joshi, Aubree Steffens

Absent: Raj Katti, Kira King, Martine DeCock, Damiano Torre, Ankur Teredesai, Chris Marriott

- Approval of minutes from March 6, 2026
 - Donald mentioned minutes may not need a vote to pass unless someone raise objections
 - Donald moved, Paulo seconded
 - Vote: passed
- Rachel's update regarding MSCSS applications for AY 26-27
 - 45 MSCSS admitted, 15 confirmed, 3 declined
 - 12 denied
 - 32 under review
 - GCSDE: 5 admitted, 4 confirmed
- Anisha: effort on recruiting students
 - April 14: open session (working with nearby community colleges)
 - April 15: engineering job fair
 - April 29: 4+1 information session for CSS juniors
- GTA update for Spring 2026
 - 5 applications
 - Awarded 3 (+ 3 Top Scholar GTAs)
 - Eyhab has a question: Is enrollment a factor to assign TAs to which courses?
 - Assignments are first made to fulfil faculty requests
 - If not enough faculty requests, then GTAs are assigned to core CSS courses based on enrollment size

- Info Session for 4+1 BS+MSCSS program, on April 29
 - Room: GWP 216
- Ready-SET-Grad event: April 14 Preview & Advising Fair, Joy 113
 - Seeking CSS faculty volunteers
- New course proposal: TCSS 5XX Introduction to Reinforcement Learning, by Xutong Liu
 - Xutong summarized the comments from the last meeting
 - Xutong believed that this course should have a unique course number other than 555 or 590
 - Prerequisites are removed
 - UW Seattle has
 - CSE 542: pure empirical deep learning
 - CSE 541: more theoretical
 - Donald Chinn:
 - Asked how to determine if students have required skills (e.g., probability, linear algebra, ...) without a prerequisite course?
 - Aubree mentioned that there's a section in the master syllabus to capture those "skills" which can be completed
 - 543 Algorithms should not be confused with this new course
 - Wes: minimal passing grade should be 2.7 (not 2.0)
 - Xutong will circulate an editable version and collect feedback for revisions
- MCSSS Thesis/Capstone
 - 17 projects: 10 thesis, 7 capstones
 - 36 reviews
 - 16 accepted, 1 being revised
 - Wes: Many proposals are longer than before probably due to the AI usage. Should we put a page limit on those proposals?
 - Donald agreed, ideas should be expressed in a more concise way
 - Ka Yee: suggested a page limit is very challenging without a common template
 - Wes: suggested using a word count limit, since different templates present similar text at varying page lengths
 - Eyhab
 - Not sure whether a page limit is a good to consider
 - Some reviews might be overly critical (the students were upset)
 - Mohamed
 - Page limit is good for the proposed idea and maybe related work doesn't count as part of the page limit

- Reviewing these proposals is extra workload for faculty reviewers
- Donald
 - Having more faculty reviews could be lightweight, in addition to the committee's judgement. It's useful to flag those super weak proposals.
- PhD admission form for faculty supervisor
 - Goal: document PhD supervisor before General Exam, i.e., who is the PhD student's primary supervisor
 - Expire in ~2 years
 - Rigorous review after trial period ~2 years
 - Track funding
 - Not going to grad school; only for CSS to admit new PhD students
- Next meeting: Friday May 1, 10am