

Minutes of CGSR Meeting #1 on 9/14/2021

The Committee on Graduate Studies and Research (CGSR) held its first meeting of AY '21/'22 on September 14th, 2021 (Tuesday) via Zoom.

Present: D. Korkin (CS, Chair), S. Shell (BBT, Secretary), T. Camesano (Dean of graduate studies), M. Demetriou (AE), L. Fichera (RBE), D. Medich (PH), J. Petitto (BCB, GS), Y. Telliel (HUA), B. Vernescu (Vice Provost of Research),

Guests: M. Terrio (Executive Director of Graduate Recruitment and Admissions)

Prof. Korkin called the meeting to order at 3:00 pm.

1. The committee reviewed an application for an Interdisciplinary PhD in Global Health. The committee requested the following additions and clarification to the proposal:
 - a. A justification for why the proposed dissertation and coursework do not fit into an existing WPI PhD program.
 - b. A list of the courses taken and planned.
 - c. An explanation of when the courses will be taken to ensure that the distribution of coursework before and after the qualifying exam is consistent with the requirements stated in the graduate catalog.
 - d. A justification for the chosen courses by comparison to typical degree requirements in established Global Health PhD programs at other institutions.
 - e. Revision of the name of the degree topic, which two committee members found unclear.
 - f. The committee suggests (but cannot and does not require) that the advisors of the proposed PhD consult with Sarah Strauss at the Global School for feedback that may help strengthen the proposal.

2. The graduate student representative J. Petitto presented for discussion a set of items that the GSG has proposed to increase student satisfaction and better meet the needs of graduate students. The items are as follows and each was discussed by the committee.
 - a. The GSG proposes a grad student satisfaction survey to assess the extent to which grad student believe that their coursework is preparing them for careers in industry and academia. They envision this survey being deployed at the department/program level to obtain detailed information about what else is needed to fully set students up for success in their fields. Prof. Camesano indicated that Associate Dean of Students Emily Perlow is preparing a student satisfaction survey focused on student life, and that this could likely be expanded to include the academics-related questions requested by the GSG. Prof. Camesano will initiate a discussion between Dean Perlow and the GSG facilitate this.
 - b. The GSG asks if there is a mechanism by which graduate course quality could be standardized. The committee did not identify any such mechanism, but it was brought to our attention that there is now an OSCAR system (<https://oscar.wpi.edu>) through which faculty and students can view the numerical portions of student course reports from recent years.

- c. The GSG brings to the committee's attention an issue of several programs requiring that a specific course on proposal writing be taken prior to the qualifying exam, but the course not being offered on a regular basis. The committee discussed other potential ways that programs could allow students to meet this requirement, such as non-credit-bearing grant-writing workshops, or establishment of a larger proposal-writing course that would serve students from multiple programs. CGSR will initiate discussions with the RSI and the WPI professional writing program to explore these ideas.
3. The committee reviewed a request from CERT to discuss a CERT proposal that all courses be set up with automatic lecture capture by default, with faculty having the option to opt out if they do not want their classes recorded. The discussion can be summarized as follows:
 - a. Some members of the committee supported the proposal, while others had concerns about it.
 - b. It was noted that class recordings are particularly helpful to students with disabilities such as ADHD and that having lecture capture be opt-out rather than opt-in may help promote a culture of inclusion at WPI.
 - c. It was questioned if opt-out lecture capture impinges upon academic freedom and the committee agreed that it does not.
 - d. The committee noted that CERT requested that CGSR discuss the proposal but did not request CGSR endorsement. The committee therefore did not attempt to reach a consensus or vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Scarlet Shell
BBT
Secretary