

# Bylaws of the Graduate Council of the University of Tennessee

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Approved by Graduate Council: March 9, 2023

[Graduate Council Minutes, March 9, 2023](#)

## Article I. Graduate Council Mission Statement

The mission of the Graduate Council is to promote excellence in graduate education at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. The Graduate Council establishes standards for admission, retention, and graduation; assesses curricular revisions and new proposals for graduate programs; evaluates interdisciplinary, intercollegiate and international programs; sets qualification standards for those who direct doctoral dissertations; and considers new initiatives and other matters of policy pertaining to graduate programs. Graduate Council is a special committee of the Faculty Senate that works closely with the Graduate School and a variety of other campus bodies to fulfill its mission.

## Article II. Organizational Structure

### Part A. Committee Organization

#### Section 1. The Executive Committee

This standing committee is comprised of the Council Chair, Council Chair-Elect, Chairs of all standing committees of Council, and the past Chair of Council. The Council Chair, Chair-Elect, and past Chair, along with the chairs of all standing committees, serve as voting members of the Executive Committee. The Dean of the Graduate School and/or the Dean's designee serve as ex-officio non-voting members of the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee serves in an advisory role to the Chair and Council on matters concerning the mission of Council.

#### Section 2. [Academic Policy Committee](#)

This committee serves as a standing committee of the Graduate Council to consider, investigate, and give detailed attention to policies, and forward recommendations for change to the policies contained in the Graduate Catalog that relate to general requirements for admission to graduate programs, enrollment of students, offering of graduate credit, and awarding of graduate degrees at the Knoxville campus of The University of Tennessee.

### **Section 3. Curriculum Committee**

This standing committee makes recommendations to the Graduate Council for the approval or denial of all curricular requests submitted to the Council and ensures the quality, consistency, and accuracy in the advertisement of the University's graduate programs.

### **Section 4. Appeals Committee**

This standing committee serves the Graduate Council by considering appeals from graduate students concerning a grievance that is unresolved at the department and college level.

Appeals may involve:

- grievances concerning the interpretation of and adherence to university, college, and department policies and procedures,
- grievances concerning grades,
- grievances concerning academic penalties imposed for academic and/or research misconduct.

This committee does not consider grievances related to race, sex, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, or veteran status. Students with such complaints have the right to file a formal complaint with the Office of Equity and Diversity, 1840 Melrose Avenue.

### **Section 5. Student Faculty Research Awards Committee**

This committee, chaired by the Dean of the Graduate School, solicits proposals for Student-Faculty Research Awards. A subcommittee of the Graduate Council, along with the Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School and the Associate Vice Chancellor for Research (or designee), evaluates proposals and makes awards.

### **Section 6. Nominating Committee**

This special committee is chaired by the current Graduate Council Chair-Elect who, in collaboration with the Graduate Council Chair and the Graduate Council Past Chair, is responsible for identifying and soliciting candidates for the next Graduate Council Chair-Elect of Council. The committee reports to the Graduate Council at the next to the last meeting of the spring semester.

### **Section 7. Additional Standing/Special Committees**

These committees may be established by the Chair of Graduate Council. Depending on specific charge of such standing/special committees, this may be done in cooperation with the Executive Committee. The Chair of Graduate Council or a designee from the Executive Committee will serve as ex-officio non-voting member of all additional standing/special committees.

### **Section 8. Standing Committee Bylaws**

All standing committees will maintain bylaws to govern their operations. These committee bylaws must be approved by Graduate Council and must conform to Council and Faculty Senate bylaws. Committee bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds vote of committee members and subsequent approval by Graduate Council.

## Part B. Graduate Council Linkages

### Section 1. Faculty Senate

Graduate Council is a special committee of the Faculty Senate, and the Chair of Graduate Council serves as ex-officio voting member of the Faculty Senate Executive Council. Faculty Senate approves implementation of actions taken by Council as stated in Council minutes.

### Section 2. Graduate School and Dean of Graduate School

The Graduate School has responsibility for implementation of policies and procedures adopted by the Graduate Council. The Dean of the Graduate School makes recommendations to Council regarding graduate programs and support for graduate students. The Graduate School provides administrative support for the activities of the Council and its committees.

### Section 3. Graduate Associate Deans

The Graduate Associate Deans provide advice to the Graduate Council and shares information on Council activities and actions with their respective units.

### Section 4. Graduate Student Senate

The Graduate Student Senate provides the students' perspective to the Graduate Council and its committees through their representatives. The Graduate Student Senate representatives to Council serve as an avenue of communication to the graduate student body on Council activities and actions.

### Section 5. Other Campus Bodies

To fulfill its mission, the Graduate Council interacts regularly with other campus entities, including the Office of the Provost, the Center for Global Engagement, the Office of the University Registrar, the Office of Research, Innovation, and Economic Development, and the Undergraduate Council.

## Article III. Membership and Officers

### Section 1. Membership

The membership of the Graduate Council consists of faculty representatives, two graduate students, and a series of ex-officio (non-voting) members. Faculty members are elected for three-year terms by the schools and colleges of the university engaged in graduate work. They must regularly teach graduate courses or supervise graduate study and must:

- hold full-time or continuing part-time appointment with the rank of assistant professor or higher, and
- perform academic duties consisting of at least half-time teaching, research, service, or departmental administration.

The two graduate students who serve one-year terms are appointed by the Graduate Student Senate. Ex-officio members are the Dean of the Graduate School, the Dean of Libraries, the Vice Provost of International Affairs, and the Chair of the Research Council or their designees. In addition, the administrative officers with primary responsibility for graduate curriculum in

each college or for oversight of all intercollegiate programs serve as ex-officio members of the Graduate Council if they are not college or intercollegiate program representatives.

Faculty representatives are elected in the spring semester for appointments to commence at the start of the following fall semester. The schools and colleges of the university engaged in graduate work will notify the Graduate School of the election results for new Council members by no later than April 15. All schools and colleges of the university engaged in graduate work together will have established guidelines to govern the election of Graduate Council members.

The number of Council members apportioned to each school, intercollegiate program, and college is based on the number of graduate students enrolled in the unit in the previous fall term, using the following table:

Graduate Students Total	Graduate Council Representatives
1-300	1
301-500	2
501-700, etc.	3

## **Section 2. Proxies**

Proxy members of Graduate Council are elected by colleges and intercollegiate programs using the same procedures and timing that are followed to elect regular members of Council. Proxies serve when regular Council members cannot fulfill their responsibilities due to a leave of absence, travel, or other scheduling conflicts. The proxy shall have all the privileges and power of the absentee member.

## **Section 3. Graduate Council Chair**

The Chair of the Graduate Council is a faculty member from Council who serves for a one-year term, following a one-year term as Chair-Elect. This one-year term as Chair of Graduate Council is followed by a one-year term as Past Chair.

The Chair assumes responsibility for Council activities on August 1st and presides over all Council meetings for that academic year. In cooperation with the Dean of the Graduate School, the Chair makes assignments to all standing committees and prepares an agenda for all Council meetings. The Chair may make assignments to ad hoc special committees as needed. The Chair casts the deciding vote on Council matters that result in a tie vote. The Chair serves as an ex-officio non-voting member of all committees of Council. The Chair has Faculty Senate responsibilities as outlined in the Faculty Senate bylaws.

The Faculty Senate bylaws specify that the Chair of Graduate Council will be a faculty member from Graduate Council, elected to a one-year term by voting members of the Council.

## **Section 4. Graduate Council Chair-Elect**

Any current faculty member of Council is eligible to be a candidate for Chair-Elect. The Nominating Committee of Council will identify and solicit candidates for this post and will

report its results during the next to the last meeting of the spring semester. Nominations may also be submitted from the floor at that time. A summary of the credentials for the candidates for Chair-Elect will be provided to Graduate Council members to aid in their decision. Election of the Chair-Elect will occur by secret ballot. The Chair-Elect of Graduate Council serves as the non-voting Chair of the Appeals Committee for a term of one year, commencing on August 1 after election at the end of the previous spring Semester. The Chair-Elect may participate as ex-officio non-voting member of all standing and special committees of Council. This experience assists the Chair-Elect in preparation for assumption of the Chair position in the following academic year. The Chair-Elect will assume the responsibilities of Chair on August 1 in the second academic year after being elected to the position of Chair-Elect. The Chair-Elect is automatically granted an extension of their appointment to Graduate Council for a period of up to three years so as to include membership on Council through one year past their term as Chair, serving in the capacity of past Chair. Since the Chair-Elect serves the entire university and not one constituency, the Chair-Elect does not count as part of a school's or college's apportionment of representatives to Council.

### **Section 5. Graduate Council Past Chair**

Upon completion of a one-year term as Graduate Council Chair, the Chair assumes the position of Past Chair. The Past Chair provides the Council with continuity and experience. Since the Past Chair serves the entire university and not one constituency, the Past Chair does not count as part of a school's or college's apportionment of representatives to the Council.

### **Section 6. Graduate Council Committee Chairs**

With the exception of Appeals Committee and Student-Faculty Research Awards Committee, all committee chairs are determined by each committee's membership during the first scheduled committee meeting. Usually, this meeting follows immediately after the first Graduate Council at the beginning of the academic year. Committee chairs will typically be individuals who have served on Graduate Council and have experience with committee matters. The Appeals Committee is chaired by the Chair-Elect of Graduate Council, and the Student-Faculty Research Awards Committee is chaired by the Dean of the Graduate School.

## **Article IV. Meetings, Decision-making and Reporting**

The calendar for regular meetings of the Graduate Council and its committees will be set by the Executive Committee of Graduate Council in consultation with the Dean of the Graduate School. Council and Committee meetings will typically take place on Thursday afternoons. Special meetings of the Graduate Council or any of its committees may be called by the Council Chair, the Council Executive Committee, or a majority of the Council membership who hold regular voting rights. Committee Chairs may call special meetings of their committees as needed. Except in the case of emergency, one week's notice will be provided for any called meeting. The schedule of regular meetings for Council and its committees will be published on the Council website and distributed to the membership at the beginning of the fall semester.

A majority of Graduate Council voting members or committee members constitutes a quorum. Majority voting will guide all decision-making. Secret ballots will be used for decision-making when requested by a majority of Council or committee members. Committee chairs and Council Chair will provide reports at each meeting of Graduate Council. The Graduate Council Chair reports to the Faculty Senate which, through its approval of curricular or academic policy changes reflected in the Council minutes, implements actions taken by Council with regard to such changes.

All meetings of Council and its committees will be governed by the most recent edition of Robert's Rules of Order.

## **Article V. Amendment of Bylaws**

The Graduate Council may amend and repeal bylaws by a two-thirds majority of voting members, provided that any proposed changes have been reviewed at the prior meeting of Council. All bylaw changes must be ratified by the Faculty Senate.