

**Graduate Council Meeting Minutes**  
**February 26, 2026**  
**Microsoft Teams – 8:00 am – 9:00 am**

**Chaired by:** Steven Sylvester, Faculty Director of Graduate Studies

**Council Members Present:** Amy Stutzenberger, Bing Han, Malisa Brooks, Mason Snow and Rita Kuo

**Excused Members:** Christine Walker and Jeffrey O'Flynn.

**Administrative Staff Present:** Aliny Xavier, Michelle Bastian

**Welcome:** Steven Sylvester, Faculty Director of Graduate Studies

**Graduate Council Meeting Minutes (January 28, 2026):** Approved.

**Graduate Faculty:** (See Teams Folder)

**School of Education** – Reviewers: Bing Hang and Malisa Brooks

Axel Ramirez – Academic

Dale Cox – Academic

Eliane Tuft – Academic

Krista Ruggles – Academic

Michelle Kerns – Academic

**College of Health and Public Service** – Amy Stutzenberger and Christine Walker

Robert Maxfield – Academic

Bryan Waite – Academic

**Motion:** Malisa Brooks

**Second:** Christine Walker

**Vote:** Yes- 4; No- 0; Abstain/Not recorded- 1

**Action:** All graduate faculty applications were unanimously approved, and no concerns were raised.

**New Business**

*Program Approval process*

**Action:** Steven discussed a difference in review process for new and modified program requests. Going forward, when there are proposals for new programs or for a more than 25% change to an existing program, proposers will be invited to Graduate Council to discuss their proposals in more detail with the council. This discussion will include feasibility research, academic assessment plans, etc.

*5000-Level Courses*

**Action:** Steven discussed the implementation of guidelines for 5000-level course approvals. The discussion focused on the resubmission of multiple proposals that did not meet these guidelines initially, as well as logistical issues regarding policy compliance. Steven will continue to work

with the relevant stakeholders to alleviate these concerns. Steven will ensure that the guidelines are accessible to the council and graduate programs for their future reference.

### *Policy Updates*

#### *Policy 662 Update*

#### *Policy 661 Update – TOEFL Changes*

**Action:** These policies, with compliance updates, are to be presented to President's Council during their 2/26/26 meeting. Steven is also working with the Deputy Provost on a potential deeper revamp of UVU's graduate policies as a whole.

#### *Policy 655 Update*

**Action:** After feedback from Academic Affairs Council, there will need to be changes to the draft of 655, due to proposed changes in policy 653. Steven discussed the effects that these proposed changes have on graduate faculty distinctions and the required level of scholarship. The status of clinical faculty in graduate programs was also discussed, particularly in relation to the designation of professional graduate faculty status.

#### *Graduate Council/Graduate Studies Mission and Charter Discussion*

- <https://gradschool.utah.edu/faculty-and-staff/graduate-council/index.php>
- <https://www.isu.edu/graduate/faculty-resources/graduate-council-/>
- <https://facstaff.grad.uw.edu/program-resources/graduate-school-council/additional-council-resources/charter-of-the-graduate-school-council/>
- <https://www.ou.edu/gradcollege/faculty-and-staff/graduate-council>

**Action:** The council discussed the role of Graduate Council in the greater university wide ecosystem. A key point of discussion was the desire by the committee to not be perceived as a procedural hinderance, but rather a body that advocates for graduate programs and their students. The council emphasized its role in programmatic quality assurance. Steven discussed the need to create an updated council charter to help outline the council's role and ensure effective support for graduate students. The creation of a Graduate Council newsletter was also discussed.

#### *Use of Duolingo*

**Action:** The council discussed the use of Duolingo as an alternative to TOEFL exams. Previously in 2024, this program was approved as an alternative means for students to demonstrate English language proficiency. Concerns have been raised regarding this approval, particularly regarding security. Steven asked the council to research this alternative option further, to inform further discussion in the next council meeting.