

Graduate Council Meeting Minutes
January 28, 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 (November 19, 2025): Approved.

Graduate Admissions Appeal Requests: (Approved Via Email)

- Bryce Sutton – Graduate Certificate in Financial Planning
- Shadaiah Richardson – MPA

Action: During winter break, Mason Snow and Amy Stutzenberger approved two student appeals via email. Steven expressed appreciation for their review of the requests and emphasized the importance of setting a deadline for future appeals, likely before the last Graduate Council meeting of the semester, so they can be discussed during meetings rather than handled over email.

Graduate Faculty:

Woodbury School of Business - Reviewers: Mason Snow

Eugene Seeley – Academic

Joel Helquist – Academic

Mitchel Murdock – Academic

Silvia Clark – Academic

Smith College of Engineering and Technology – Reviewer: Rita Kuo

Charles Paul Morrey – Academic

College of Health and Public Service – Reviewer: Amy Stutzenberger

Eric Russell – Academic

College of Humanities and Social Sciences – Reviewer: Malisa Brooks

Shantelle Tjaden – Academic

Motion: Malisa Brooks

Second: Amy Stutzenberger

Vote: Yes- 5; No- 0; Abstain- 0

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

Curriculum: (See CourseLeaf)

Course Inactivation Requests

BIOL 5020 – Design and Risk Management for the Life Sciences

Action: Steven approved the inactivation of BIOL 5020.

School of Education – Reviewers: Christine Walker and Bing Han

New Course/Course Changes:

EDUC 5160 – Secondary Social Studies Methods
EDUC 5170 – Women in Utah History
EDUC 5180 – Historiography for Social Studies Teachers
EDUC 5190 – Utah History

Motion: Malisa Brooks

Second: Mason Snow

Vote: Yes- 5; No- 0; Abstain- 0

Action: Course changes were approved under the instruction that they will need assurance from SOE that these courses will in fact be revised. Steven will meet with the Curriculum office this Friday (1/28) and will let them know that a deadline will be set for these revisions are done, he will also leave a comment in CourseLeaf to let them know about this decision.

Smith College of Engineering and Technology – Reviewers: Mason Snow and Rita Kuo

New Course/Course Changes:

TECH 6020 – Applied Creative Thinking

TECH 6910 – Applied AI Capstone Project

Motion: Mason Snow

Second: Malisa Brooks

Vote: Yes- 5; No- 0; Abstain- 0

Action: The motion to approve new courses/course changes was unanimous.

College of Humanities and Social Sciences – Reviewers: Malisa Brooks and Jeffrey O’Flynn

New Course/Course Changes:

HIST 5250 – Advanced Teaching History in the Secondary Curriculum

LANG 5200 – Methods of Teaching a Foreign Language

Motion: Tabled.

Second:

Vote: Yes- 0; No- 0; Abstain- 0

Action: Steven noted concerns with several proposed 5000-level courses due to insufficient documentation demonstrating graduate-level rigor. Malisa suggested that detailed syllabi, particularly for the language course, would help clarify expectations. Discussion identified a proposed history 5000-level course modeled after an existing 4000-level course, with concern about offering both when prerequisites are the same. Members agreed additional explanation is needed to differentiate the courses if both levels are offered. Steven will add review comments, share 5000-level guidelines, contact relevant departments, and coordinate with Mark Lentz to obtain clarification so proposals may move forward.

College of Science – Reviewers: Steven Sylvester and Amy Stutzenberger

New Course/Course Changes:

SCIE 5210 – Science Teaching Methods I

SCIE 5220 – Science Teaching Methods II

Motion: Tabled.

Second:

Vote: Yes- 0; No- 0; Abstain- 0

Action: All proposed 5000-level courses will receive feedback requesting revision to align with the current Graduate Council 5000-level course guidelines.

Woodbury School of Business – Mason Snow and Jeffrey O’Flynn

New Course/Course Changes:

FIN 5210 – Retirement Planning

FIN 5260 – Estate Planning Fundamentals

FIN 5300 – Income Tax Planning

FIN 5700 – CFP Exam Preparation

FIN 5800 – Wealth Management and Financial Planning Capstone

Motion: Tabled.

Second:

Vote: Yes- 0; No- 0; Abstain- 0

Action: All proposed 5000-level courses will receive feedback requesting revision to align with the current Graduate Council 5000-level course guidelines.

College of Health and Public Service – Steven Sylvester and Amy Stutzenberger

New Program/Program Change Request:

MPA – Masters in Public Administration

Motion: Amy Stutzenberger

Second: Malisa Brooks

Vote: Yes- 5; No- 0; Abstain- 0

Action: The motion to approve new courses/course changes was unanimous.

New Business

Policy 662 Update

Policy 661 Update – TOEFL Changes

Policy 655 Update

Action: Steven updated the council on the status of policy revisions, explaining that Academic Affairs has paused major changes pending alignment with sister universities, that minor compliance updates to policies 661 and 662 are proceeding, and that the council will use the newly finalized 5000-level course guidelines for future reviews.

5000-Level Course Guidelines

Action: Multiple colleges submitted 4000-to-5000 level course changes without proper documentation. Science, Language, History, and Finance courses all lack evidence of increased rigor. Previously approved Finance courses (from 2022) also held to current standards. All 5000-level proposals tabled pending compliance with new guidelines.

Use of Duolingo

Action: Discussion was tabled for a future meeting.

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: Steven facilitated a discussion among Council members, regarding the purpose, goals, and representative role of the Graduate Council. He emphasized that the Council's primary responsibility is to uphold quality and consistent standards across graduate programs while supporting program success and avoiding both unnecessary barriers and automatic approvals. The Council also serves a policy oversight

function, ensuring that graduate policies are effective and do not impede program needs. Members discussed their role as liaisons between the Graduate Council and their respective colleges, including communicating relevant discussions to departments and bringing faculty feedback back to the Council when issues directly affect programs. Malisa shared an example of proactively engaging department chairs and program directors to gather input on potential policy changes, which was identified as an effective model for engagement. Steven encouraged members to submit agenda items when issues impact their programs and noted that member feedback has previously informed more inclusive policy development. He concluded by outlining plans to draft a Graduate Council mission statement and charter for member review prior to the next meeting.

Action Items:**Steven**

- Add revision comments to approved EDUC courses and follow up with administration by the end of the week
- Upload 5000-level guidelines and provide feedback to all tabled course proposals
- Bring appeal request deadline proposal to the next directors' meeting (within a month)
- Draft Graduate Council charter/mission statement for next meeting

Bing

- Review assigned EDUC courses and provide additional comments by the end of the week

All members

- Review linked charter examples from other universities and provide feedback
- Communicate relevant discussions back to their college program directors when issues directly impact their programs

Adjourn