GSAS Executive Committee Summary, 2013-2014

Members
Krzysztof Sliwa (Chair) – Professor, Physics & Astronomy; Robert Cook – Professor, Psychology and Dean ad interim, Graduate School of Arts & Sciences; Sinaia Nathanson – Senior Lecturer, Psychology and Associate Dean, Graduate School of Arts & Sciences; Avner Baz – Associate Professor, Philosophy; Richard Chechile – Professor, Psychology; Barbara Wallace Grossman – Professor, Drama; Judith Haber – Professor, English; Jonathan Kenny – Professor, Chemistry; Steven Marrone – Professor, History; Martha Pott – Senior Lecturer, Child Development; Michael Reed – Professor, Biology; Weiping Wu – Professor, Urban & Environmental Policy & Planning

August 28, 2013

• The committee approved a Chemistry Ph.D. student’s request for a second extension of time for one semester until February 2014. (The student successfully completed all degree requirements and graduated in February 2014.)

• The committee approved an English Ph.D. student’s request for a second year-long extension of time for one year until August 2014. The committee first reviewed this petition in May 2013 but did not come to a conclusion due to temporary unavailability of student records. (The student successfully completed all degree requirements and graduated in May 2014.)

• The committee approved an English Ph.D. student’s request for a second year-long extension of time, until August 2014. The committee first reviewed this petition in May 2013 but did not come to a conclusion due to temporary unavailability of student records.

• The committee approved an English Ph.D. student’s request for a year-long extension of time, until August 2014. The committee first reviewed this petition in May 2013 but did not come to a conclusion due to temporary unavailability of student records.

• The committee reviewed a request for reinstatement for a Philosophy MA student who took a personal withdrawal while not in good academic standing. The committee requested the student and department provide a detailed plan of study approved by the Philosophy Department and a statement of the student’s intention to complete the degree in the 2013-14 academic year. After receiving these documents, the committee approved the request for reinstatement via email.

• The committee approved one transfer of credit:
  MA student, Child Development – One course taken at UC Davis, Fall 2007

• The committee also discussed NEASC credit hours requirements, and potential clarifications to the transfer of credit policy. During the previous semester, several issues arose regarding students who petitioned to transfer courses taken as an undergraduate into a graduate program.

Note: At the time of this meeting, Lynne Pepall was Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences and attended in that role.
September 20, 2013

• In early September, the committee solicited feedback on how the closing of the Office of Graduate Studies in summer 2012 as well as other administrative changes in the graduate school affected the work of graduate departments including that of faculty, staff, and the admissions process. The committee discussed this feedback and continued to solicit feedback.

Note: At the time of this meeting, Joanne Berger-Sweeney, Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences, was acting Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences and attended in that role.

October 10-11, 2013

• The committee met on October 10 to continue the discussion of feedback from graduate departments regarding communication between departments and student services. On October 11, members of the Executive Committee attended the GSAS Policy & Programs Committee meeting to present this feedback and discuss with that group.

Note: At the time of this meeting, Joanne Berger-Sweeney, Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences, was acting Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences and attended in that role.

October 31, 2013

• The committee met to discuss documents created to streamline communication and operations of the admissions process for the fall 2014 admissions cycle.

Note: At the time of this meeting, Joanne Berger-Sweeney, Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences, was acting Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences and attended in that role.

November 26, 2013

• The committee approved a UEP master’s student’s petition to waive a continuation fee for fall 2013 in light of difficulties experienced during the 2012-2013 academic year that impeded degree progress.

• The committee approved a UEP master’s student’s petition for a one-year extension of time until Fall 2014.

• The committee approved an English Ph.D. student’s petition for a one-year extension of time until May 2014. (The student successfully completed all degree requirements and graduated in May 2014.)

• The committee approved seven students’ transfers of credit:
  MA student, Art and Art History – One course taken at Harvard Summer School, Summer 2013
  MS student, Biology – One course taken at Harvard Extension School, Spring 2013
  MA student, Child Development – Two courses taken at Tufts, Spring 2012, Summer 2012
  MA student, Education – One course taken at Lesley University, Fall 2010
  Ed.S. student, School Psychology – One course taken at Lesley University, Summer 2013
  MA student, UEP – Two courses taken at Boston University, Summer 2012, Fall 2012
  MA student, UEP – One course taken at Tufts Fletcher School, Summer 2011
January 14, 2014

• The committee approved an English Ph.D.’s petition for reinstatement following a personal withdrawal while in good academic standing. Reinstatements following a personal withdrawal while in good academic standing are typically approved by the dean without requiring Executive Committee approval, but due to the recent appointment of Robert Cook as interim dean the petition was brought to the committee.

• The committee approved two students’ transfers of credit:
  MS student, Biology – One course taken at Harvard Extension School, Fall 2013
  MA student, Philosophy – One course taken at University of Miami, Fall 2012

• The committee discussed the policy regarding students’ participation in a defense via video-conferencing and determined that the policy will remain as it currently stands (master’s and Ph.D. students may not participate in their own defense via video-conference; one committee member, who is not the committee chair, may participate by video-conference; TTS will facilitate the video-conferencing).

April 3, 2014

• The committee approved an Occupational Therapy OTD student’s extension of time for one year, until February 2015.

• The committee discussed a petition from a UEP master’s student to waive a continuation fee for the Spring 2014 semester. The student is out of time to degree, and the committee recommended that the department provide the student with information about taking a medical leave, and that the fee waiver would not be granted if the student chose not to take a medical leave.

• The committee discussed the issue of a statute of limitations for completion of degree regarding a student who was last enrolled in the 1980’s. The committee decided that the student would be permitted to petition for reinstatement; the student subsequently petitioned the dean for reinstatement and will be reinstated for fall 2014.

• The committee discussed the fact that transfers of credits and leaves of absence will be moving to an online process via iSIS in Fall 2014. The committee decided that for the first several semesters that the new process is used, at the end of each semester, the committee will evaluate the transfers of credit submitted to ascertain whether the system works well and that the courses approved for transfer are all appropriate for a Tufts graduate program. The completed request forms and their outcomes will need to be provided to the Executive Committee at the end of each semester.

• The committee discussed whether a student can receive a degree from a program he or she has not been officially admitted to and enrolled in, e.g. if a student in one department completes a coursework-only master’s program in another department. The committee determined to clarify this policy in the handbook after soliciting recommendations from departments it could affect (such as Math, Biology, Economics).
• The committee discussed the possibility of a department offering half-semester 0.5-credit courses, a course structure that has not been previously used at Tufts. The committee recommended departments move forward and work with the Registrar’s office to offer courses with this structure.

April 30, 2014

• The committee approved an English Ph.D. student’s request for a second year-long extension of time, until May 2014. (This student’s first request for an extension of time was granted by the committee in August.)

• The committee approved four students’ transfers of credit:
  MA student, German – Two courses taken at the University of Osnabrück (Germany), Fall 2013*
  MS student, Math – One course taken at Suffolk University, Spring 2011**
  MA student, OT – One course taken at the University of Michigan: Dearborn, Summer 2013
  Dual UEP-Friedman School MA student – three courses taken at GSAS while primary enrolled at Friedman School (as these are not courses from an outside institution, the two-course limit does apply)

*Issues arose at the Registrar’s office when the grades for these courses did not appear to convert to a B- or better (Tufts requirement) in the US grading system, while the department attested that they were equivalent to appropriate Tufts graduate-level work. The courses were transferred into the student’s degree, but the committee identified the need to clearly communicate that it is a student’s responsibility to apply for transfers of credit in a timely fashion so that such considerations can be reviewed in a thorough way.

**This course was taken at the student’s undergraduate institution while enrolled in a bachelor’s degree program. The Registrar’s office did not permit transfer given that courses taken while enrolled in a degree program. The committee identified the need to clarify the policy regarding courses taken at other institutions to state that all courses taken while enrolled in a degree program are considered to have counted toward that degree, even if they were not required for the degree, unless “formally reserved” through an established process (few schools have this process available).

• During the year, the subject of online education came up several times in discussions. The committee noted the need to develop a policy about online courses’ eligibility to be transferred into a Tufts graduate program.

Krzysztof Sliwa agreed to serve as chair for the 2014-2015 academic year.