



VCU Graduate School

Bylaws

ARTICLE I: Purpose

The purpose of these bylaws is to establish an orderly procedure whereby the Graduate Faculty can exercise its duties and responsibilities for the development of University academic policy necessary for the conduct of graduate education at Virginia Commonwealth University.

ARTICLE II: Membership

Section 1. Primary responsibility for designating Graduate Faculty shall rest with the head of an academic unit that has the authority to make appointment, promotion and tenure recommendations with the approval of the Dean of the School or College and concurrence of the Dean of the Graduate School.

Section 2. The eligibility criteria for membership on the Graduate Faculty:

1. Appointment as full-time faculty in the university.
2. Professorial rank (assistant professor and above).
3. Earned terminal degree or, if no terminal degree, exceptional contributions to graduate education.
4. Engagement in research or other scholarly or creative activities.
5. Participation in graduate education.

Section 3. Privileges and responsibilities of Graduate Faculty:

1. To serve when elected to the Graduate Council.
2. To chair thesis (all Graduate Faculty) and dissertation (only Graduate Faculty holding the Ph.D. or equivalent degree) committees.
3. To vote at meetings of the Graduate Faculty.
4. To participate in the election of members of the Graduate Council.

Section 4. Provision may be made for other individuals with special skills and knowledge to serve as Affiliate Graduate Faculty members. These individuals may include visiting faculty and professionals in the field. An Affiliate Graduate Faculty member may teach graduate courses and may advise and serve, but not chair, thesis or dissertation committees.

Section 5. Procedure for appointment to the Graduate Faculty:

Each year the Dean of the Graduate School will provide each school/college dean with a current list of Graduate Faculty in that unit. Using criteria stated by these bylaws, the academic unit head will affirm the appointment of current Graduate Faculty, designate additional faculty who are qualified for Graduate Faculty status and remove faculty who are no longer qualified or with the university. Recommendations approved by the academic school/college dean will be forwarded to the Dean of the Graduate School for concurrence.

ARTICLE III: Functions of the Graduate Faculty

Section 1. The Graduate Faculty has the major responsibility for graduate education at the university and exercises jurisdiction over all educational matters in the Graduate School. The Graduate Faculty elects Graduate Council members, initiates actions to be considered by the Graduate Council, reviews the actions of the Graduate Council and serves as a reference body on matters referred to it by the Graduate Council.

Section 2. The Graduate Faculty has responsibility for such fundamental areas as curriculum, methods of instruction, assessment of student achievement and research, and those aspects of student life that relate to the graduate educational process.

Section 3. The Graduate Faculty recognizes university standards, formulates the requirements for the graduate degrees offered, determines when the requirements for graduate degrees have been met and recommends on whom degrees be conferred.

Section 4. Members of the Graduate Faculty shall serve on standing and special committees when duly selected by procedures established by these bylaws.

ARTICLE IV: Meetings of the Graduate Faculty

Section 1. Meetings of the Graduate Faculty may be called by the Dean of the Graduate School or if requested to do so by a written petition signed by at least 5 percent of the Graduate Faculty. Meetings must be held during the fall or spring semesters.

The Dean shall notify all members of the Graduate Faculty of any called meeting at least two weeks before the meeting. The notice shall include an agenda of items to be considered.

The Graduate Faculty may decide at this called meeting to send or return the item of business to the Graduate Council for consideration, or to submit the issue to a vote of the entire Graduate Faculty. The Dean of the Graduate School will distribute the ballots that will be returned to the Dean of the Graduate School for tabulation. The result shall become effective upon approval by a majority of the Graduate Faculty members voting within two weeks of the day on which the ballots are distributed.

A quorum for a called meeting shall consist of 10 percent of the Graduate Faculty.

ARTICLE V: Graduate Council

Section 1. The Graduate Council is the policymaking body of the Graduate School. It shall serve and act on behalf of the faculty and students of the Graduate School.

Section 2. The purpose of the Graduate Council shall be to promote excellence in all graduate programs. While the Graduate Council shall perform the functions of review and coordination, the academic units shall be responsible for support and management of graduate programs. The following items are set forth in order that the role and responsibility of the Graduate Council can be further defined:

1. To encourage the maintenance of high standards of academic quality in all graduate programs.
2. To provide leadership in the development of graduate programs to meet current, new and emerging needs.
3. To establish general university academic policies and procedures relating to graduate programs.
4. To foster creativity and scholarship in graduate programs.
5. To represent the interests of the Graduate Faculty and graduate students in the university.
6. To advise the Dean of the Graduate School on the affairs of graduate education at the university.

Section 3. The duties of the Graduate Council, subject to the academic policies and procedures of Virginia Commonwealth University, shall be:

1. To establish academic policy for graduate education.
2. To establish guidelines for graduate student admissions.
3. To establish guidelines for requirements for all graduate degrees.
4. To review and approve new and revised graduate courses and degree programs.
5. To develop policy for graduate student support.
6. To participate in periodic qualitative reviews of graduate programs.
7. To encourage research and teaching efforts at the graduate level.
8. To review and recommend nominees for the Graduate School awards as appropriate.
9. To provide for long-range academic planning as it relates to graduate education.

Section 4. The Graduate Council shall be composed of the following voting members:

1. Two Graduate Faculty members elected from and by each school or college except the Graduate School.
2. One Graduate Faculty member elected from and by each academic unit not contained within a school or college, which offers a graduate degree, such as VCU Life Sciences.
3. The President, or elected representative, of the Graduate Student Association.
4. The Dean of the Graduate School, or a representative designated by the Dean, chairs the Council but votes only to break a tie using criteria stated by these bylaws.
5. The Associate Dean(s) of the Graduate School serves as an ex-officio member of the Graduate Council.

Section 5. Terms and elections shall be as follows:

1. Terms shall be for three years.
2. Elections shall be held during the spring semester of each year; designations to committees shall also be made during this period. Elections within schools/colleges will be staggered such that no two members from the same school/college will be elected in the same year. The term of office shall begin with the start of the academic year following the Graduate Council election.
3. Should any member fail to serve a full term, a replacement to serve the remainder of the term shall be elected by the procedures specified in Article V, Section 4, Item 1.

Section 6. Meetings of the Graduate Council

1. The Graduate Council shall meet at least four times during the academic year with special meetings as called by the chair.
2. Minutes of the proceedings of the Graduate Council shall be recorded and posted on the Graduate School website.
3. A quorum for actions shall consist of a majority of the members of the Graduate Council.
4. The agenda for each meeting shall be distributed to the council members at least 10 days prior to the meetings. Items may be placed on the agenda by the dean of the Graduate School, a standing committee of the Graduate Council, or by two-thirds vote of the voting members present at the council meeting.

Section 7. Committees of the Graduate Council

Standing committees of the Graduate Council shall be appointed each year by the Dean of the Graduate School from the membership of the council. The Graduate Dean, or a representative designated by the Graduate Dean, is an ex-officio member of all committees but votes only to break a tie. Each standing committee shall be comprised of at least five Graduate Council members, one of whom shall be chair elected by members of the committee. The standing committees of the Graduate Council and their responsibilities are:

1. The Programs and Courses Committee shall review proposals for new and revised graduate courses and degree programs and make recommendations to the Graduate Council.
2. The Internal Review Committee shall be responsible for reviews of all graduate programs as part of the university program review procedure and shall establish guidelines for graduate program review. It shall make recommendations concerning these reviews to the Graduate Council.
3. The Admissions and Academic Standards Committee shall recommend and review requirements for graduate admissions and degree requirements for all graduate programs. The committee will hear appeals from applicants denied admission to graduate study by the Graduate School and students dismissed from the Graduate School, and will make recommendations to the Graduate Dean.
4. The Policy and Procedures Committee shall recommend policy and procedures for governance of graduate education to the Graduate Council. The Committee will hear student appeals for exceptions to Graduate School rules and to administrative decisions related to graduate education at the university.

The Graduate Council may recommend, or the Graduate Dean may appoint, such special committees as necessary or desirable to meet the duties of the Graduate Council.

ARTICLE VI: Administration of the Graduate School

The chief administrative officer of the Graduate School shall be the dean, who shall be responsible for administering and supervising the Graduate School. This shall include, but not be limited to:

1. Fostering a climate for Graduate Faculty that is conducive to creativity and scholarship.
2. Furthering the interests of the Graduate Faculty.
3. Supporting and implementing appropriate vehicles for career growth and development within the Graduate Faculty.
4. Supporting and protecting the rights and responsibilities of the Graduate Faculty.
5. Upholding standards of quality for appointment to the Graduate Faculty.
6. Implementing policies and procedures for admission and graduate processes and for maintaining academic records.
7. Administering scholarships, fellowships and assistantships.
8. Seeking improved financial support for graduate students.
9. Producing the university graduate bulletin, thesis and dissertation manual, and other documents as directed by Graduate Council.
10. Participating in planning and development of graduate education with assistance from the Graduate Council.
11. Serving as an advocate and spokesperson for graduate education, research and other scholarly activity.

ARTICLE VII: Parliamentary Authority

The rules contained in Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised shall govern meetings in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with these by laws. The Graduate Council shall elect a parliamentarian annually from the membership of the council.

ARTICLE VIII: Amendments

Section 1. A proposed amendment to these bylaws may be brought to a vote of the Graduate Faculty by a majority of the Graduate Council or when presented in writing 15 days prior to an official meeting of the Graduate Council by a signed petition of 10 percent of the Graduate Faculty.

Section 2. These proposed amendments, as submitted above in Article VIII, Section 1, shall be submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School within 30 days of receipt and shall become effective upon approval by a majority of the Graduate Faculty members voting within 30 days of the day on which the ballots are distributed, and upon the approval of the university's chief academic officer, the President and the Board of Visitors.

ARTICLE IX: Ratification of the Bylaws

Bylaws approved by the Graduate Faculty, the university's chief academic officer, the President and the Board of Visitors to become effective August 16, 1985. Amended May 20, 2004. Reaffirmed May 1, 2014.