

AGENDA
Graduate Council
April 10, 2007

Action Items

Minutes of last Graduate Council Meeting March 13, 2007

Dr. Ozden Ochoa, Associate Graduate Dean at Texas A&M University
Texas A&M University System Pathways Initiatives

Committee Reports

Committee on Curriculum (Dr. John Hanners)

Thesis/Dissertation Hours and Grading
Use of Variable hours for Thesis/Dissertations
Approval of Minor Editorial Curriculum Changes
Curriculum Change Requests (Chem 589 and Spa 516)

Committee on Graduate Faculty, Research & Instruction (Dr. Sue Espinoza)

Senior Membership Review

Committee on Administration (Dr. Jeff Kopachena)

Proposed changes to Admissions Procedure in regard to language proficiency
examination scores

Scholarship Committee (Dr. Jon Travis)

Jerry & Marilyn Morris Distinguished Student Scholarships

Announcements

Federation Fall Seminar, October 5, 2007

Next Meeting: May 8, 2007 (if needed)

Adjournment

CHARGE

Look into the convention of posting thesis and dissertation hours and grades on official transcripts and recommend to the Graduate Council (1) that current procedure remain the same; or (2) that the procedure be changed.

Proposal

Replace the “I” grade with “PR” (Progress) or “U” (Unsatisfactory) with a letter grade or S/U assigned to the final six hours (thesis) or an S/U for the final nine-twelve hours (dissertation). Departments will determine their own policy concerning how many “U” grades are allowable before students are dismissed from thesis or dissertation work.

Problem

Only the last six thesis hours are graded (ABCDF—S/U) and the last nine-twelve dissertation hours are graded (S/U). All hours taken before those thresholds are marked down as “I,” Incomplete, in three-hour increments and are not counted toward the Grade Point Average. Consequently,

- The “I” grade has a negative connotation as a permanent transcript mark, requiring explanation by thesis advisors to outside agencies as to why the Incompletes appear.
- The “I” grade may not be an accurate reflection of student performance or progress, or lack of progress, towards completion of the thesis or dissertation.

Background

Eight universities* were surveyed. No two universities recorded thesis and dissertation credit hours alike. No discernable pattern emerged and institutional history seemed to play a part in how thesis and dissertation hours were entered upon an official transcript. Only one university used the “I” designation and upon successful completion of a thesis or dissertation, that “I” grade changes to “CR” (Credit).

Desired Outcome:

- The new designation more accurately reflects a department’s assessment of student progress.
- A transcript doesn’t carry permanent marks of “Incomplete.”

* Texas A&M University-Kingsville, West Texas A&M University, Tarleton State University, University of Texas-Dallas, University of Texas-Arlington, University of Texas-Tyler, University of North Texas, Lamar University.

CHARGE

Should thesis and dissertation courses carry variable credit?

Proposal

Keep thesis and dissertation hours at three credits each with no variable credit. A student may take two sections of 518 or 718 per semester.

Problem

Workload for theses and dissertations stages may occur in unequal distribution from semester to semester. A student, for example, may lack only an oral defense during a semester. Perhaps a one- or two-hour credit course would be more appropriate and more closely reflect the student's actual workload.

Justification

Variable credit may impact

- Economics—Income loss may occur with variable credit.
- Workload—Variable credit, in fact, may *not* be an accurate reflection of student workload or, especially, faculty advisors' student contact hours.
- Assessments—Variable credit may make assessment of student progress more difficult and create disparate expectations among departments for one-, two-, or three-credit courses.

CHARGE

Should minor editorial changes in the curriculum change process be approved at the dean's level?

Problem

Curriculum changes occupy a great deal of time for the Graduate Council Curriculum Committee and the Graduate Council with a workload that makes difficult the ability to tell important changes from routine and non-substantive changes.

Proposal

Minor editorial changes—defined as prefix/number changes, non-course content materials, etc.—may be approved directly at the Graduate School by the Dean or the Assistant Dean who will then report such changes to the Graduate Council.

Justification:

Concentrated faculty vetting of curriculum changes is to

- avoid course duplication;
- insure integrity of intellectual inquiry;
- avoid “turf wars;” and
- keep abreast of programs, program changes, and interdisciplinary connections.

Minor matters may be handled as such by those responsible for the overall state of affairs within Graduate Studies and Research, leaving major changes and issues associated with those changes to the scrutiny of the Curriculum Committee and of the Council at large.

Course Number :	CHEM 589
Current 25 character Short Title :	INDEPENDENT STUDIES
New Prefix :	CHEM
New 25 character Short Title :	
SCH Value :	3
Level :	Graduate
Lec/Lab Contact Hours :	3/0
CIP Number :	4005010002
Multiple Topics :	
Identify Change(s) :	Course description.
Full Title :	Independent Studies in Chemistry and Biochemistry
Description :	Assigned reading or assigned original research project, which the student does under the guidance of a faculty member. Students in option I may take this course in addition to Chem 518. Students in option II may take this course to improve their qualifications and career prospects. May be repeated once, for work on the same project. Prerequisites: more than two complete semesters of graduate study, instructor's approval, and department head's consent.
Cross List With	
Justification :	This course shows on the curriculum web site, but not in the printed catalog. I go by the site and treat it as an existing course. For well qualified graduate students in either option who want to diversify and improve their skills. Option-II students, who do not do original research, may become more employable because of this training. This course may distinguish our non-thesis option from similar graduate programs.

Course Number : 516
Current 25 character Short Title : LATIN AMERICAN LIT
New Prefix : SPA
New 25 character Short Title : Contemp Latin Am Lit
SCH Value : 3
Level : Graduate
Lec/Lab Contact Hours : 3
CIP Number : 1609050001
Multiple Topics :

Identify Change(s) : Name and description change.

Full Title : Contemporary Latin American Literature

Description : A study of the representative works from Latin American authors focusing on literary movements and/or special scope within the sociopolitical framework of Latin America, twentieth and twenty first centuries. Studies on specific authors, geographical areas, (Southern cone, Andean Literature, Caribbean, etc...) social problems, theoretical issues or women writers in narrative, drama, poetry or essay.

Cross List With

Justification : This change will assist in updating our curriculum for the MA in Spanish.

**University of Sheffield, English Language Teaching Centre
Comparison of IELTS & TOEFL Scores:**

University of Sheffield English Language Teaching Centre Comparison of TOEFL and IELTS scores			
TOEFL Paper	TOEFL Computer	TOEFL iBT	IELTS Equivalent
625 - 680	263 - 300	113 - 120	7.5 - 9.0
600	250	100	7.0
575	232	90 - 91	6.5
550	213	79 - 80	6.0
525	196	69 - 70	5.5
500	173	59 - 60	5.0
475	152	49 - 50	4.5
450	133	39 - 40	4.0
425	113	29 -30	3.5
under 425	under 113	less than 29	below 3.5

Note: The term *IELTS* refers to the International English Language Testing System, which is the standard test used by British universities to assess the English language proficiency of applicants whose first language is not English. It consists of four components: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Because it includes a fairly rigorous test of both of the productive skills (speaking and writing), many selectors feel that the IELTS gives a clearer picture of an applicant's proficiency than the TOEFL.

Current A&M Commerce Policy:

(5) An official transcript of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) score of at least 500, unless the student is from an English-speaking country.

College Station Policy:

Applicants whose native language is not English are required to submit proof of English proficiency, which is satisfied by:

- I. a minimum TOEFL score of:
 - a. 550 for paper-based testing (p-BT),
 - b. 213 computer-based testing (c-BT),
 - c. 80 internet-based testing (i-BT), or
- II. a minimum IELTS score of 6.0 overall band, or
- III. completing all years of a Bachelor's degree or higher at a U.S. accredited university.

Proposed new A&M Commerce Policy:

(5) Applicants whose native language is not English are required to submit proof of English proficiency, which is satisfied by:

- IV. a minimum TOEFL score of:
 - a. 500 for paper-based testing (p-BT),
 - b. 173 computer-based testing (c-BT),
 - c. 60 internet-based testing (i-BT), or
- V. a minimum IELTS score of 5.0 overall band

Texas schools that accept IELTS and minimum require scores.

<u>Organization</u>	<u>Course Type</u>	<u>Min Academic</u>
<u>Board of Nurse Examiners for the State of Texas</u>		6.50
<u>Texas A&M Health Science Center</u>	Graduate admissions	6.00
<u>Texas A&M University</u>	Graduate admissions	6.00
<u>Texas A&M University</u>	Undergraduate admissions	6.00
<u>Texas A&M University, Mays Business School</u>	Graduate admissions	6.00
<u>Texas Christian University</u>	Undergraduate admissions	6.50
<u>Texas Culinary Academy</u>	General	6.50
<u>Texas Culinary Institute</u>	General	6.00
<u>Texas State University - Graduate College</u>	Graduate admissions	6.50
<u>Texas State University-San Marcos</u>	Undergraduate admissions	5.50
<u>Texas Tech University Graduate School</u>	Graduate admissions	6.50
<u>University of North Texas</u>	Graduate admissions	6.50
<u>University of North Texas</u>	Undergraduate admissions	6.50
<u>University of North Texas, MBA program</u>	Graduate admissions	6.50
<u>University of Texas at Austin</u>	Graduate admissions	6.50
<u>University of Texas at Austin</u>	Undergraduate admissions	6.50
<u>University of Texas at Dallas</u>	Graduate admissions	6.50
<u>University of Texas at Dallas</u>	Undergraduate admissions	6.00
<u>University of Texas at San Antonio</u>	Graduate admissions	5.00
<u>University of Texas at San Antonio</u>	Undergraduate admissions	5.00
<u>University of Texas Medical Branch, Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences</u>	Graduate admissions	6.50
<u>University of Texas Medical Branch, School of Allied Health Sciences</u>	Graduate admissions	6.50
<u>University of Texas Medical Branch, School of Nursing</u>	Graduate admissions	6.50
<u>University of Texas, Arlington</u>	Graduate admissions	7.00

Score processing, reporting and interpretation

All IELTS marking takes place at the test centre by trained markers and examiners. Markers are trained to understand the IELTS marking policy and are required to demonstrate that they are marking to standard before they are allowed to mark Listening and Reading papers. Markers are re-tested every two years to ensure that their marking remains up to standard. Systematic monitoring and double marking of a proportion of answer sheets is carried out at each administration.

Examiners for the Writing and Speaking modules are recruited and trained in line with agreed standards. They are required to demonstrate that they are marking to standard every two years in addition to on-going monitoring of their performance.

Candidates receive scores on a Band Scale from 1 to 9. A score is reported for each skill module of the test. The four individual module scores are averaged and rounded to produce an Overall Band Score. Overall Band Scores and Listening and Reading scores are presented as whole or half bands; Writing and Speaking band scores are reported in whole bands only.

Overall Band Score

Candidates receive a Test Report Form setting out their Overall Band Score and their scores on each of the four modules, Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking. Each of the module scores is equally weighted. The Overall Band Score is calculated by taking the mean of the total of the four individual module scores.

Overall Band Scores are reported to the nearest whole or half band. For the avoidance of doubt, the following rounding convention applies; if the average across the four skills ends in .25, it is rounded up to the next half band, and if it ends in .75, it is rounded up to the next whole band.

Thus a candidate achieving 6.5 for Listening, 6.5 for Reading, 5.0 for Writing and 7.0 for Speaking would be awarded an Overall Band Score of 6.5 ($25 \div 4 = 6.25 = \text{Band } 6.5$).

Likewise a candidate achieving 4.0 for Listening, 3.5 for Reading, 4.0 for Writing and 4.0 for Speaking would be awarded an Overall Band Score of 4.0 ($15.5 \div 4 = 3.875 = \text{Band } 4.0$).

On the other hand, a candidate achieving 6.5 for Listening, 6.0 for Reading, 6.0 for Writing and 6.0 for Speaking would be awarded band 6 ($24.5 \div 4 = 6.125 = \text{Band } 6$).

For more information on how IELTS test material is produced click [here](#) .

Listening and reading

IELTS Listening and Reading papers contain 40 items and each correct item is awarded one mark; the maximum raw score a candidate can achieve on a paper is 40. Band scores ranging from Band 1 to Band 9

are awarded to candidates on the basis of their raw scores.

Although all IELTS test materials are pretested and trialled before being released as live tests, there are inevitably minor differences in the difficulty level across tests. In order to equate different test versions, the band score boundaries are set so that all candidates' results relate to the same scale of achievement. This means, for example, that the Band 6 boundary may be set at a slightly different raw score across versions. Click [here](#) for a detailed description of the IELTS Question Paper Production process.

The tables below indicate the mean raw scores achieved by candidates at various levels in each of the Listening, Academic Reading and General Training Reading modules during 2004 and they provide an indication of the number of marks required to achieve a particular band score.

Listening

Band Score Raw score out of 40

5	16
6	23
7	30
8	35

Academic Reading

Band Score Raw score out of 40

5	15
6	23
7	30
8	35

General Training Reading

Band Score Raw score out of 40

4	15
5	23
6	30
7	34

The Academic and General Training papers are graded to the same scale. The distinction between the two modules is one of genre or discourse type. Academic papers may contain source texts featuring more difficult vocabulary or greater complexity of style. It is usual that, to secure a given band score, a greater number of questions must be answered correctly on a General Training Reading paper.

Writing and speaking

When marking the Writing and Speaking modules examiners use detailed performance descriptors which

describe written and spoken performance at each of the 9 IELTS bands.

Writing

Examiners award a band score for each of four criterion areas: Task Achievement (for Task 1), Task Response (for Task 2), Coherence and Cohesion, Lexical Resource and Grammatical Range and Accuracy. The four criteria are equally weighted.

Speaking

Examiners award a band score for each of four criterion areas: Fluency and Coherence, Lexical Resource, Grammatical Range and Accuracy and Pronunciation. The four criteria are equally weighted.

Versions of the band descriptors for Writing and Speaking have been developed to help stakeholders better understand the level of performance required to attain a particular band score in each of the criterion areas. IELTS examiners undergo intensive face to face training and standardisation to ensure that they can apply the descriptors in a valid and reliable manner. To view a version of the descriptors for Writing Task 1 click [here](#), for Writing Task 2 click [here](#) and for Speaking click [here](#) .