

Curriculum Discussion with GCC Representatives  
January 22, 2014

1. Thesis Defense
  - a. All defenses are technically open to the public, but there are no procedures or rules in place regarding whether defenses may be closed or whether they should be more advertised.
  - b. Most students stated on the survey that they would like to attend more defenses.
  - c. Students stated that if defenses were more advertised, it would be helpful in order to know what to expect in order to graduate.
  - d. Students at the meeting stated that in order to obtain a PhD, one should be able to give a colloquium-type talk.
2. Research Presentations
  - a. 90% of students said that they have ample opportunity to present their research.
  - b. Suggested that the department should advertise resources that could help us receive feedback about our presentations.
  - c. Suggested that after GSS, we could have an anonymous survey so that other graduate students could provide feedback on the talk, level of understand, etc.
3. Thesis Committee
  - a. GCC decided that thesis committee meetings should not be mandated.
4. Qualifying Exam
  - a. 50% of faculty did not want to bring the qualifying exam back.
5. "Second Chance" Mechanism
  - a. Both faculty and students seemed happy with the idea of a second chance mechanism for students who perform poorly in a class – either whole course re-do or extra work.
  - b. Fact: If you get any grade below a B, you are automatically put on academic probation.
  - c. Fact: Graduate school will not give you your degree if your GPA is less than a 3.0.
  - d. One faculty member stated that other schools have grade inflation so that their students can get fellowships.
  - e. Suggested that students could act as TA for analogous undergraduate course if they did poorly in the graduate course.
6. Preliminary Exam
  - a. Complaints that variance in preliminary exam is huge and the exam is not uniform for all students.
  - b. Suggested that we need to recommend more advisor-student communication.
7. Graduate Student Working Hours
  - a. Graduate students in total spending between 40 and 80 hours per week working. The average was about 60. The average of what graduate students thought was appropriate was 55.

8. Research Assistantships
  - a. About half of respondents said that having a more flexible first-year schedule (e.g. delaying teaching requirements, thus allowing them to begin their research project earlier) would have attracted them to Duke.
9. Class/TA Requirements
  - a. Faculty interested in letting students “bank” their teaching assistantships to allow them to begin research earlier.
10. Core Course Committee
  - a. Core Course Committee has the right to change grades if the grade distribution for a core course is not what they want.
  - b. Students expressed that they believe that if a grade distribution is given, professor should honor it.
  - c. Grade distribution percentage to letter grade translation should be clear.
  - d. “Do we really want to create an environment where students are competing for a slightly higher spot on the curve?”