

SOUTHERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY

Graduate Council Bylaws

**Approval by the Faculty Senate May 6, 2026
Approved by the Graduate Council, March 30, 2026**

SOUTHERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE COUNCIL
RULES OF ORDER
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SOUTHERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE COUNCIL BYLAWS

I. Function and Authority

- A. The Graduate Council is a permanent Special Committee of the Faculty Senate charged with improving the overall quality of the graduate curriculum. The Graduate Council derives its authority from the faculty and is led by elected members of the faculty. Graduate Council members are elected as outlined in Graduate Council governing documents. The Council is charged with the responsibility for developing and maintaining University policies that establish the minimum acceptable standards for graduate programs of study offered at Southern Connecticut State University. These policies encompass the areas of minimum acceptable academic qualifications for admission as a graduate student and the acceptable level of academic performance for continued matriculation.
- B. The Graduate Council, through its activities, encourages the various graduate and professional degree granting units to maintain a high level of quality and performance by both faculty and students and holds primary responsibility for the general direction and long-range planning of graduate education at Southern Connecticut State University.
- C. The actions of the Graduate Council are subject to the statutory rights, responsibilities and jurisdiction of the Board of Regents for Higher Education and the University's faculty bargaining agent. The President or designee has the responsibility for the review of all actions by the Graduate Council and the right to disapprove actions that infringe upon the implementation of approved Board policies.

II. Membership

A. Graduate Council

- 1. The Graduate Council shall be composed of faculty members elected from departments/free-standing voting units with at least one graduate program and the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies who serves in an ex-officio, non-voting capacity.
- 2. Only members of the full-time faculty members may be elected as members of the Graduate Council. It is recommended that a graduate coordinator within the department/free standing unit serve as a member to the graduate council.
- 3. Graduate Council members will be elected to serve for a term of three years commencing in the September following election. One-third of the members will be elected each year. If the member can no longer serve, the voting unit shall elect a new member to fill the unexpired term.
 - i. Graduate Council representatives are expected to be available and to attend meetings from 1:10-3 pm on Mondays. Therefore, Graduate Council representatives should not schedule or be scheduled for

- conflicting obligations (e.g. teaching, advising, research, etc.).
 - ii. Graduate Council representatives who fail to regularly attend meetings may be asked to resign by the Graduate Council Chair.
4. The Faculty Senate, Library Services, Graduate Student Affairs Committee, University Curriculum Forum, and Graduate Student Advisory Council (student member) shall have observer status on the Council. Each unit shall determine its own representative.

B. Procedures Related To Voting Units

1. The basic voting unit for selection of Graduate Council members shall be the academic department. Each department that has a graduate program shall have at least one representative on the Graduate Council. A free-standing graduate program may also have an elected representative.
2. Members of the Graduate Council shall be elected by their respective Department.
3. Departments and free-standing programs may have more than one representative to the Council based upon the 'total academic credits' listed in the Graduate Credit Productivity Report (generated by the graduate studies office or the office of assessment and planning) for the current academic year. The criteria are as follows: one representative for up to 1000 credits; two representatives for 1001-2000 credits; and three representatives for those programs with 2001 or more 'total academic credits' generated. These total academic credits will be calculated using the average annual total academic credits calculated over the most recent two calendar years (including summer and winter intersession enrollment) to determine the maximum allowable representation. SGPS will report the average annual total academic credits for each department by the end of March each year.
4. The Chair of the Graduate Council shall review the Fall and Spring semester statistics of hours generated by each department/free-standing program prior to the April meeting of the Council to determine whether adjustments should be made to current apportionments.
5. The Chair of the Graduate Council shall present its report regarding apportionments at the April meeting of the Graduate Council.
6. All reapportionments shall take effect at the beginning of the next academic year. All reapportionments shall be honored for a three-year period, coinciding with the three-year election cycle for Graduate Council representatives. If maximum allowable representation drops, the representative will be non-renewed upon the expiration of their term.

III. Officers

The Officers of the Graduate Council shall be the Chairperson and Secretary; each shall serve one-year terms.

A. Chairperson

1. Election - The Chairperson shall be elected by majority vote of the Council at the final meeting of each year. The role of chairperson may be split between co-chairs. Henceforth, any place where chairperson is written

is also applicable to co-chairs. The Chairperson may be re-elected for two additional terms, but shall serve no more than three consecutive terms. The Chairperson shall take office at the end of the last official meeting of the academic year in which he/she is elected. Only current Council members who have served a minimum of one year on the Council and who will be Council members in the following academic year are eligible to be elected as Chairperson.

2. Duties of the Chairperson shall include but not be limited to:

- i. presiding at all Council meetings;
- ii. keeping membership informed of Council activities;
- iii. formulating the agenda for meetings with the Executive Committee
- iv. informing and working with committees to identify priority topics for review for potential policy additions or revisions;
- v. acting as official liaison between the Graduate Council and the School of Graduate and Professional Studies in all matters pertaining to Graduate and Professional Studies;
- vi. calling regular and special meetings (See Section IV A. 1. & 2);
- vii. making committee appointments;
- viii. conducting meetings of the Executive Committee prior to each regular meeting of the Graduate Council;
- ix. submitting a report on the work of Graduate Council to the Faculty Senate during;
- x. attending Faculty Senate meetings; and
- xi. serving as the representative of the Graduate Council at the May graduate commencements as a member of the platform party.

B. Secretary

1. Election - The Secretary shall be elected by majority vote of the Council at the final meeting of each year. The Secretary may be re-elected for two additional term, but shall serve no more than three consecutive terms. The Secretary shall take office at the same time the Chairperson takes office.

2. Duties of the Secretary shall include but not be limited to:

- i. recording official minutes of Graduate Council meetings;
- ii. coordinating official correspondence of the Council including meeting packets and curriculum consent agendas;
- iii. assisting the Chairperson in carrying out their responsibilities
- iv. presiding (pro-tem) at Council meetings in the absence of the Chairperson.

C. Chairs of Standing Committees – see item V. below

D. Vacancies in Office

1. A vacancy in any office shall be filled by a special election at the next meeting of the Graduate Council.

E. Removal of Officers

1. A motion to remove from office any Council officer shall be introduced by a

written petition clearly stating the grounds for removal of the officer and bearing the signatures of not less than 30% of the Graduate Council membership.

2. A motion to remove from office any Council officer may be introduced at any regular meeting of the Council, but may not be voted upon until the next regular meeting. A motion to remove shall require the affirmative votes of two-thirds of the Graduate Council membership on a roll call vote.

IV. Meetings

A. Graduate Council Meetings

1. Regular meetings of the Graduate Council shall be held on one Monday each month from 1:10pm – 3:00pm. An annual schedule of meetings in agreement with the official academic calendar shall be published one week prior to the official start of the academic year.
2. The first meeting of the year shall take place during the first week of classes and shall be convened primarily to constitute standing committees and announce the chairs of the standing committees by elections.
3. Special meetings may be called by the Chairperson of the Council as deemed necessary. Special meetings of the Council also shall be called by the Chairperson at the request of at least one-third of the Council members. The call to such meetings must be issued at least one week in advance and must clearly state the purpose of and justification for the meeting.
4. A majority (one more than half of the current membership) of the voting membership of the Graduate Council shall constitute a quorum.
5. Each Council member shall be entitled to one vote and a simple majority of the voting membership is required to pass any motion with the exception of a motion to remove an officer. Absentee ballots are not permitted. Any Council member may request a secret ballot. Such a request shall be honored, with the exception of a motion related to removal of an officer (III.B.2.).
6. The usual order of business shall be:
 - a. Call to order.
 - b. Consent Agenda
 - i. Disposition of minutes.
 - ii. Approved Curriculum
 - c. Announcements.
 - d. Reports of Committees.
 - e. Old Business.
 - f. New Business.
 - g. Adjournment.
7. All meetings of the Graduate Council shall be open to any interested member of the university community.
8. With the consent of the Council, visitors may be afforded the privilege of the floor at the discretion of the Chairperson.

9. Any member of the University community may request time on the agenda by presenting a written request to the Chairperson of the Council at least three weeks before the scheduled meeting time, identifying the topic and the amount of time requested.
10. Minutes of all meetings shall be recorded by the Secretary of the Graduate Council, reviewed by the Executive Committee, and be made available to all Council members, the Registrar, the Faculty Senate President, Departmental Chairpersons, Deans, Vice Presidents, the Provost, and the President.

B. Full-Time Faculty Meetings

1. There shall be a scheduled meeting of the full-time faculty members at least once each year at which time the Chairperson of the Council and Council Committees shall report to the faculty on activities of the Council and respond to comments and questions from the faculty.
2. Special Meetings of the Full-Time Faculty
 - a. A minimum of 25% of the members of the full-time faculty may petition in writing the Chairperson of the Council for a special meeting of the full-time faculty on a specific issue or proposal.
 - b. Such a meeting must be scheduled within 30 days of receipt of the petition unless there are extenuating circumstances for a delay.

V. Graduate Council Committees

There shall be the following Standing Committees of the Graduate Council: Executive Committee, Curriculum Committee, Policies and Procedures Committee, and Standards and Assessment Review (StAR). Each member of the Graduate Council shall serve on a minimum of one Standing Committee. The Chairperson of the Graduate Council appoints members of standing committees with representation from each academic school when possible. Adjustments to the membership shall be made by the Chairperson of the Graduate Council as needed. The role of committee chairperson may be split between co-chairs. Henceforth, any place where chairperson is written is also applicable to co-chairs.

A. Standing Committees

1. Executive Committee
 - a. Membership:
 - i. Chairperson of the Council,
 - ii. Secretary of the Council,
 - iii. Chairpersons of all Standing Committees
 - b. Duties:
 - i. Coordinate the activities of the Council and act for the Council in exigency.
2. Curriculum Committee
 - a. Membership: Council members appointed annually by the Council Chairperson.

- b. Committee Chairperson: The members of the Committee shall elect a Chairperson for the following year at the last Committee meeting of the current year.
- c. Meetings: The committee meets twice monthly on Monday's from 1:10pm-3pm, with additional meetings scheduled as needed.
- d. Duties:
 - i. Recommend to the Graduate Council operating procedures for the submission of new and revised courses, concentrations/specializations, certifications, dual degrees, joint degrees, and programs.
 - ii. Review proposals for new and revised courses, concentrations/specializations, certifications, dual degrees, joint degrees, and programs and present recommendations to the Council.
 - iii. Recommend curricular ideas and innovations to the Graduate Council.
 - iv. Formulate and maintain a *Policies and Procedures Manual of the Curriculum Committee*.

3. Policies and Procedures Committee

- a. Membership: Council members appointed annually by the Council Chairperson.
- b. Committee Chairperson: The members of the Committee shall elect a Chairperson for the following year, at the last Committee meeting of the current year.
- c. Meetings: The committee meets twice monthly on Monday's from 1pm-3pm, with additional meetings scheduled as needed.
- d. Duties:
 - i. Make recommendations to the Council for equitable membership among the voting units according to parameters established by the Council.
 - ii. Make recommendations to the Council on all matters pertaining to the Bylaws of the Council or, if appropriate, any standing rules the Council or a committee of the Council may seek to adopt that will affect the organization and business of the Council.
 - iii. Make recommendations to the Council pertaining to formal interaction with other university committees, organizations and units.
 - iv. Present a slate of nominees and conduct both the annual election of officers and any special elections in the event of a vacancy in office.
 - v. Advise the Council on all matters pertaining to elections, recall and referendum matters, coordinating with the Faculty Senate in any referendum that is required.

- vi. Review, revise, or develop recommendations for policy related to graduate program academic standards and curriculum.
- vii. Encourage, recommend, or propose policies for curricular innovations.
- viii. Formulate and maintain a *Policies and Procedures Manual of the Policies and Procedures Committee*.
- ix. Notify the Chairperson of each voting unit of the vacancies or changes for the following academic year as specified in II.E.3 and 4.

4. Standards and Assessment Review (StAR)

- a. Membership: Council members appointed annually by the Council Chairperson. Of note, the StAR committee is a committee that is comprised of members from both GC and UCF.
- b. Committee Chairperson: The committee Chairperson serves StAR in a co-chairperson role with the Co-Chairperson from UCF (sec III, Part 2B (3)).
- c. Meetings: The committee meets on one Monday a month from 1:10 pm-3pm, with additional meetings scheduled as needed. A schedule of meetings will be made available 1 week prior to the start of the academic year.
- d. Duties as defined in the StAR Guidelines for Academic Program Review:
 - i. Define and oversee the academic program review process, ensuring the promotion of academic excellence and the continuous improvement of academic program quality.
 - ii. Evaluate whether departments have established an assessment process for their program and have engaged in meaningful and candid self-reflection about their programs' quality.
 - iii. Develop and/or enhance the culture of self-assessment and reflective practices within academic units
 - iv. Produce documentation for university-wide external accreditation bodies that reflect this review process.
 - v. Maintain *Guidelines for Academic Program Review*
 - vi. Steward documentation (including calendar) of graduate programs that have been reviewed and those with future review dates.
 - vii. Ensure that the GC Chairperson has access to the graduate program review calendar in real time.
 - viii. Prepare an annual report summarizing the work of StAR to be presented at the final GC meeting for publication to the university.

B. Ad Hoc Committees

1. The Council may direct the Chairperson to establish ad hoc or special committees to perform specific tasks for a designated time period. The Chairperson and members of such committees will be appointed by the Council Chairperson from a pool of volunteers. An ad hoc or special committee will be dissolved when its duties are completed.

C. General Duties of Committees

1. All standing committees and ad hoc or other special committees will maintain public records (agendas, minutes) on GC Organization systems (Confluence, Teams, etc.) and submit a written report of minutes to the Secretary 1 week prior to the next Graduate Council meeting to be included in the meeting packet agenda.
2. The chair person for each committee will attend monthly Graduate Council and Executive Committee meetings to respond to questions or provide additional information for information in their submitted committee meeting minutes.
3. At the final meeting of the Graduate Council, the executive committee will present a written summary of each committee's activities of the academic year. The report will:
 - a. Summarize the activities of the committee;
 - b. Evaluate the degree of progress made;
 - c. Identify areas of strength and weakness;
 - d. Present an agenda in priority order for the following year.
4. The final meeting report will be provided to the Faculty Senate, University Curriculum Forum, School of Graduate and Professional Studies, and Provost.
5. At the first meeting of next academic year, the Chair of Graduate Council and Chairs of the Standing Committee (or designee) shall present a copy of the annual report for the previous academic year and briefly summarize their goals and objectives for the current academic year.

V. Full-Time Faculty Member Initiatives

A. General

1. Full-time faculty members are encouraged to bring matters to the Council through their elected representatives. The Council shall consider such proposals and take appropriate action. In addition, members of the full-time faculty may develop and present initiatives and referenda as needed.

B. Faculty Initiatives

1. The Graduate Council shall be bound to consider for enactment:
 - a. Written proposals which have been signed by at least 25% of the total full-time faculty.
 - b. Proposals recommended by a majority vote of the full-time faculty at the annual full-time faculty meeting.

2. Faculty initiatives will generally be brought before the Graduate Council at the next scheduled meeting and must be addressed no later than the following regularly scheduled meeting. A special meeting will be called in a case when this procedure cannot be followed.

C. Faculty Referenda

1. Any full-time faculty member may petition the Graduate Council to conduct a referendum with respect to any action taken by the Council. Signatures of at least 25% of full-time faculty members are required to initiate a referendum.
2. The Policies and Procedures Committee, in coordination with the Faculty Senate, shall conduct the referendum.
3. A majority vote of the total full-time faculty in favor of the referendum is required to rescind any Council action.
4. Full-time faculty referenda will generally be brought before the Graduate Council at the next scheduled meeting and must be addressed no later than the following regularly scheduled meeting. A special meeting will be called in a case when this procedure cannot be followed.

VI. Changes in the Bylaws

- A. Changes in the Bylaws may be proposed at a regular or special meeting of the Graduate Council, provided:
 1. Council members have received written notice of each of the proposed changes at least one week prior to the meeting (this can be via electronic mail or other means).
 2. A two-thirds majority of the Council membership in attendance approves the changes.
- B. Changes become effective on approval by the Faculty Senate and University President or designee.

VII. Parliamentary Authority

- A. The rules contained in the current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order* shall govern in all cases to which they are applicable, unless in conflict with these bylaws, and any special rules of order the Council may adopted