

John Jay College of Criminal Justice

City University of New York

Committee on Graduate Studies

Minutes of March 14, 2025

The Committee on Graduate Studies held a remote meeting March 14, 2025, at 12:30 PM, via Zoom. Interim Dean Andrew Sidman called the meeting to order.

Voting Members Present: Ruby Aguirre, Jana Arsovska, Marta Concheiro-Guisan, Kendra Doychak, Susan Kang, Simone Martin-Howard, Susan Pickman, Ellen Sexton, David Shapiro, Andrew Sidman, Dominic Stellini, Robert Till, Valerie West

Voting Members Absent: Shweta Jain, Daniel Matos, Chitra Raghavan, Avijit Roy, Ian Seda Irizarry, Lucia Velotti, Rebecca Weiss

Non-voting Attendees Present: Kayla Bassknight, Melissa Dolan, Sulema Ebrahim, Alyssa Hollywood, Kathy Killoran, Shavonne McKiever, Mechthild Prinz, Patrizia Pelgrift, Dyanna Pooley, Tatsiana Sokhar, Bryce E. Tolbert, Sergio Villavicencio

I. Dean's Announcements—Interim Dean Andrew Sidman

Interim Dean Sidman relayed that per CUNY policy the deadline for students to submit work to resolve incompletes for Spring and Summer 2025 courses is November 30, 2025, and the deadline for faculty to submit grade changes for those incompletes is December 7, 2025. Incompletes will turn into FINs on December 14, 2025.

This is in line with the uniform grade change policy implemented by CUNY in summer of 2024, which says that students, including at the graduate level, are given until the end of the following long semester to resolve incompletes. This is not retroactive, so incomplete grades received prior to fall 2024 are not subject to this.

II. Approval of the minutes of February 14, 2025

There was no discussion.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of February 14, 2025. The minutes were approved unanimously with 12 votes in favor.

III. Hooding Ceremony (Thursday, May 22) – Kayla Bassknight, Alyssa Hollywood

Kayla Bassknight relayed that the hooding ceremony will take place the Thursday before Memorial Day, May 22nd, and will be held in the theater on campus. Commencement will occur the following Wednesday, May 28th, at the Barclays Center. Information about commencement can be found on the John Jay website.

Professor Marta Concheiro-Guisan recalled a reception that would occur after the hooding ceremony before the pandemic and asked if that would return. Kayla Bassknight and Dean Dominic Stellini said that due to funding and time constraints there would likely not be a similar event this year, but programs were encouraged to hold their own celebrations for their students if possible. He said they would explore what could be planned for next year.

IV. Old Business—None

V. New Business

A. Programs

i. Program Revisions

1. Revision of the ADAP Program for the BA in Global History Leading to the MA in Human Rights

Dean Kathy Killoran introduced this revision, which realigns changes to the bachelor's program major with the master's degree portion of the joint degree. This proposal also makes a change to the Human Rights MA portion of the program, in removing a new History graduate course, as it has never been developed and is not necessary for the MA.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the revision to the ADAP Program for the BA in Global History Leading to the MA in Human Rights. The motion was approved unanimously with 12 votes in favor.

2. Revision of the MA in International Crime and Justice

1 Professor Jana Arsovska introduced this revision, which moves ICJ 704 from the core courses to
2 electives. This way, instead of 8 core courses and 4 electives, students will take 7 core courses
3 and 5 electives. The total credits for the degree is not changing. This will allow students to have
4 a more customized experience with the program. This revision will also add a sentence to the
5 program description emphasizing the program's focus on transnational crime. Finally, to make
6 the internship course (ICJ 780) more attractive, the required number of internship hours is
7 being reduced and the requirements for the course pre-requisites are being relaxed in hopes of
8 students doing internships earlier in the program. A corresponding course revision is also being
9 considered today.

10
11 Interim Dean Sidman praised the revision to the internship, noting that the reduction in hours
12 being considered here is consistent with what a 6-credit course should expect of students,
13 especially considering the additional coursework required.

14
15 **A motion was made and seconded to approve the revision to the MA in International Crime**
16 **and Justice. The motion was approved unanimously with 12 votes in favor.**

17 18 **B. Courses**

19 20 **i. Course Revisions**

21 22 **1. ICJ 706 Transnational Crime**

23
24 Professor Arsovska explained that the revision here changes the title and description to
25 emphasize that modern incarnations of crime and associated technologies are being considered
26 in this course in addition to the topics traditionally covered in the transnational crime
27 curriculum.

28
29 **A motion was made and seconded to approve the revision to ICJ 706. The motion was**
30 **approved unanimously with 12 votes in favor.**

31 32 **2. ICJ 780 Internship in International Crime and Justice**

33
34 As mentioned above, this revision reduces the number of fieldwork hours needed for the
35 internship. Additionally, adjustments are made to the prerequisites and requirements so that
36 more students can take part in this valuable experiential learning course.

1 **A motion was made and seconded to approve the revision to ICJ 780. The motion was**
2 **approved unanimously with 12 votes in favor.**

4 **VI. Grade Appeal Policy Revision**

6 Interim Dean Sidman introduced the proposed revisions to the grade appeal policy for a first
7 read. The intention is to bring it back in April for a second read and a vote as the academic
8 department chairs have sent in some feedback he wants to respond to. One goal for this
9 proposal is to bring the policies that govern graduate grade appeals into alignment with those
10 that govern undergraduate grade appeals. Undergraduate students file a grade appeal with the
11 Registrar's Office, while graduate students file a grade appeal with the Dean of Academic
12 Programs.

14 Before the Undergraduate Studies and Graduate Studies offices were combined into the Office
15 of Academic Programs, these appeals were filed with the Dean of Graduate Studies. This
16 proposal would see graduate grade appeals also be filed with the Registrar's Office. The grade
17 appeals would still go to the appropriate grade appeal committee specified in each program's
18 bylaws. In the case that a program does not specify, then the appeal would go to an
19 appropriate departmental committee. The revised policy also states that if a program grade
20 appeals committee finds in favor of the student, and the faculty member, who is the only
21 person who can actually approve the grade change, refuses to change the grade, then the
22 student can now appeal to the College-wide Grade Appeals committee. If the college-wide
23 grade appeals committee finds in favor of the student, then the department chair/or graduate
24 program director can be empowered to change the grade.

26 Professor David Shapiro pointed out the following language in the draft: "The CWGAC (College-
27 Wide Grade Appeals Committee) is expected only to answer the question of whether
28 'extraordinary circumstances' exist such that the Department Chair should be empowered to
29 change the grade without the faculty member's consent". Professor Shapiro expressed concern
30 that "extraordinary circumstances" is unclear, and that the invocation of the college-wide
31 committee is extraordinary in and of itself. Interim Dean Sidman agreed and noted that the
32 "extraordinary circumstances" language was imported from the original undergraduate policy.
33 The intent is not to put up another barrier, so we can rework the policy to remove the
34 "extraordinary circumstances" language for clarity while ensuring that the spirit of the rule
35 change is present.

1 Graduate Student Tatsiana Sokhar asked where the bylaws for a program could be found if they
2 are not present on the website. Interim Dean Sidman replied that bylaws are filed with the
3 Office of Legal Counsel when a program is approved, so one can inquire there.

4
5 Interim Dean Sidman implored everyone to bring the draft of the grade change policy revision
6 back to their departments/programs for discussion and to contact him with any
7 recommendations for further changes.

8 9 **VII. Academic Probation and Student Dismissals**

10
11 This discussion is in response to Professor Valerie West's request from last month that we talk
12 about our academic probation and student dismissals procedures. Interim Dean Sidman briefly
13 went over his process for determining whether or not to dismiss graduate students based on
14 the mathematical probability of them attaining the required 3.0 cumulative GPA by the time
15 they finish their required credits. He pointed out that dismissals are only recommended after
16 the end of the spring semester because of the short amount of time between the end of Fall
17 semesters, the tight grading deadline, and the beginning of Spring semesters.

18
19 Professor West said that she brought this topic up because she often faces a dilemma on
20 whether or not to dismiss a student. There are a variety of reasons why a student may not be
21 performing well, and it is not easy to determine whether an improvement can be reasonably
22 expected. Professor West asked if we could institute a more detailed policy to aid in making
23 these tough decisions.

24
25 Dean Kathy Killoran and Registrar Shavonne McKiever went over the academic review process
26 for undergraduate students and explained some of the guidelines they have put in place to
27 make these tough decisions and to help students get back on track prior to dismissal, such as
28 credit limits. For the undergraduate process, we are fortunate to be able to refer dismissed
29 students to our CUNY Justice Academy partnerships at the community colleges.

30
31 Interim Dean Sidman noted that credit limits are also placed on graduate students who are on
32 probation. He stated that he would put together a document of the guidelines he follows to
33 see if others would find it useful. It would not have to sit as official policy; it would instead help
34 program leaders in making recommendations. The bulletin currently does not offer any
35 definitive cut-offs for when dismissal is decided, so this will offer some clarity to those in a
36 decision-making role.

Several committee members agreed that we should strive to minimize situations where students for whom it would be mathematically improbable to attain the required GPA for their degree are allowed to continue to spend their time and money attempting more courses.

Interim Dean Sidman said he would circulate a document outlining his principles regarding probation and dismissal before the next meeting for a follow-up discussion.

VIII. Strategic Planning Processes – VP Christopher Shults, Dyanna Pooley, Andrew Sidman

Interim Dean Sidman said that Vice President Christopher Shults could not make it today, but he called for participation in the ongoing events that are shaping the school's new strategic plan. Director of Outcomes Assessment Dyanna Pooley noted some of the upcoming events and briefly went over the timetable of development of the strategic plan, which will culminate with a vote in College Council this coming Fall to approve the plan. Director Pooley then presented an update on the goals met for our current strategic plan before outlining the results of an environmental scan that contains statistics and current events that will inform how we approach our educational mission in the coming years.

IX. New Business—None

X. Program Announcements—None

XI. Other Business

Director of Academic Support and Learning Technologies Bryce Tolbert offered a brief update on a new digital learning lab that will debut in Fall 2025. This lab will feature, among other things, recording studios and a hy-flex classroom and lab. Director Tolbert asked that anyone with recommendations for other amenities (software or hardware) for the lab that would aid in developing students' digital literacy contact him.

Student Council Representative Ruby Aguirre offered an update on the efforts of Student Council this year as well as upcoming events. Despite challenges, there are many possibilities for supporting graduate students if they are given more resources. The graduate cohort is the most active it has been in 14 years, so there is a strong foundation in place.

Interim Dean Sidman directed attendees to the College Council page, which has a recording from the March meeting where Representative Aguirre gave a presentation with a fuller update

on recent Student Council actions. Representative Aguire then noted that an upcoming Sip and Paint activity is open to faculty and will be a great opportunity to connect with Graduate Students. Finally, Representative Aguirre announced that the graduate cohort of Student Council has been invited to the Strategic Planning Committee, and there is excitement regarding what they will be able to accomplish before that process wraps up.

The meeting concluded at 2:01 PM.

Submitted by,

Alexander Bolesta, scribe