



## **Graduate Policy & Affairs Committee (GPAC)**

*Michael Ciuchta, Ramanpreet Kaur, Saira Latif, Eleanor Abrams, Lisa Marchand, Jeff Moore, Suzanne Moore (absent), Nese Orbey (absent), Neil Shortland, Noah Van Dam\**

*Kevin Petersen\*\*, Mai Nguyen<sup>1</sup>, Nancy Ludwig<sup>1</sup>, Deborah White<sup>1</sup>*

\*\*Ex-officio, <sup>1</sup>non-voting

## **MINUTES**

<https://uml.curriculog.com/agenda:210/form>

**Monday February 17, 2026 at 3:30-5:00 PM in Alumni Hall 102**

1. **Committee Member Intentions for 2026-2027** (*Noah Van Dam or Kerry Patenaude*)
  1. Please communicate your intention to remain on or leave the Graduate Policy Affairs Committee for the 2026-2027 academic year by written communication to Kerry Patenaude **before Friday March 20**. [A request was made to ask senators who would like to be on a committee or a different committee as well.](#)
  2. During April nominations for Officers, please also send nominations for Chair by written communication to Kerry Patenaude **before Friday April 17**.
  3. At the May 4 Senate meeting, Senate will elect Officers, Colleges will elect committee members, and Committees will elect Chairs.
2. **Minutes from the December 15, 2025 Meeting** (*Noah Van Dam*)  
<https://uml.curriculog.com/proposal:2962/form> Jeff Moore noted that he is still working on the student petition. Motion to approve by Jeff Moore, seconded by Lisa Marchand. Approved: Yes 8, No 0, Abstain 0.
3. Policy Proposals
  1. **UML – Clarify the Policy on Graduate Student Transfer Credit** (*Noah Van Dam*)  
– **Change Policy (University-Level)**

<https://uml.curriculog.com/proposal:2859/form>. UMass Lowell currently maintains two related policies governing graduate credit applied toward doctoral programs:

1. Graduate Student Transfer Credit policy – This applies when individual graduate courses are transferred into a program
2. Acceptance of Master’s Degree Toward Doctoral Requirements policy – This applies when a student’s entire earned master’s degree is accepted toward a doctoral program.

To reduce confusion, GPAC recommends adding a brief clarifying statement at the beginning of the Transfer Credit policy. Students will either transfer in single course, or transfer in an entire master’s degree.

- **Faculty Senate** – Initial Discussion and vote to initiate the 2-month process was approved on 12/1/25
- **Call for Comment #7** – Announced on 12/5/25
- **UPC** – Approved on 2/9/26
- **GPAC** – Will review on 2/17/26 **Motion to approve by Noah Van Dam, seconded by Ramanpreet Kaur. Approved: Yes 8, No 0, Abstain 0.**
- **Faculty Senate** – Will review on 3/2/26

#### 4. **Program Proposals** (*Noah Van Dam*)

1. **ADMISSIONS: M.S. Computer Engineering** (*Paul Robinette*) – **Change Graduate Admission Requirements**  
<https://uml.curriculog.com/proposal:2889/form>. Remove the GRE requirement. The committee asked how the department will compensate for the GRE not being included in the admission requirements; the department will use GPA, transcripts, and letters. The committee asked about international students, as grading policies across different countries are quite different; Grad Admissions uses a third party to evaluate. The committee advised that this type of information should be in the proposal as the purpose of Curriculog is to have a record of the request and the reason. **Motion to approve by Saira Latif, seconded by Jeff Moore. Approved: Yes 8, No 0, Abstain 0.**
2. **ADMISSIONS: M.S. Electrical Engineering** (*Paul Robinette*) – **Change Graduate Admission Requirements**  
<https://uml.curriculog.com/proposal:2888/form>. Remove the GRE requirement. **Motion to approve by Neil Shortland, seconded by Ramanpreet Kaur. Approved: Yes 8, No 0, Abstain 0.**
3. **M.S. Computer Engineering** (*Paul Robinette*) – **Change Plan**

<https://uml.curriculog.com/proposal:2798/form>. Change required courses in the plan: Add six courses, update course numbers on two courses, and remove three courses. The Registrar noted that the effective term is listed as Spring 2026, but it will need to be Fall 2026; the department confirmed that works. The committee asked if the courses exist; two years ago Engineering updated several course numbers, and part of this request is to update the catalog to match the current course numbers. **Motion to approve by Eleanor Abrams, seconded by Michael Ciuchta. Approved: Yes 8, No 0, Abstain 0.**

4. **M.S. Electrical Engineering** (*Paul Robinette*) – **Change Plan**  
<https://uml.curriculog.com/proposal:2797/form>. Change required courses in the plan: Add two courses, and update course numbers on two courses. **Motion to approve by Neil Shortland, seconded by Michael Ciuchta. Approved: Yes 8, No 0, Abstain 0.**
5. **M.S. Computer Science – all three subplans (General Option, Bio/Cheminformatics Option, Cybersecurity Option)** (*Tingjian Ge*) – **Change Plan**  
<https://uml.curriculog.com/proposal:2882/form>. Add COMP.5900 Professional Experience in Computer Science to the list of approved electives and update the catalog description. This proposal was done in consultation with ISSO in order to enable international students to take advantage of internship and coop opportunities and receive course credit while adhering to federal guidelines for students on Visas. **Motion to approve by Saira Latif, seconded by Eleanor Abrams. Approved: Yes 8, No 0, Abstain 0.**
6. **Ph.D. Chemistry – no subplan** (*Matthew Gage*) – **Change Plan**  
<https://uml.curriculog.com/proposal:2905/form>. Change required courses from specific courses to elective choices, and update the catalog description. The department would like to reduce the courseload from 9 courses to 6 courses, and change the structure. The goal of the change was to bring the program requirements more in-line with other Chemistry Ph.D. programs across the country, and increase course flexibility to reflect broadened expertise in the department. A question was raised that the programs now seem nearly identical and a student in the Biochemistry option might not have to take any Biochemistry courses. The differences have been reduced for electives, but the different degree pathways require students to take a defined core that is different and remaining courses are selected in consultation with their advisor. The different options can also provide students with an advantage in certain industries to have a more specific degree, so wanted to keep the distinct programs. Another question was raised about the reduced number of course credits required and whether that could cause problems for a student who leaves the program part-way through to be able to leave with a master's. By the time the

students have finished the course work they likely will have enough thesis credits to be able to complete an MS thesis and leave with an MS should they choose. [Motion to approve by Jeff Moore, seconded by Neil Shortland. Approved: Yes 8, No 0, Abstain 0.](#)

7. **Ph.D. Chemistry - Biochemistry** (*Matthew Gage*) – **Change Plan**  
<https://uml.curriculog.com/proposal:2906/form>. Change required courses from specific courses to elective choices, and update the catalog description. [Motion to approve by Jeff Moore, seconded by Neil Shortland. Approved: Yes 8, No 0, Abstain 0.](#)
8. **Ph.D. Polymer Science – no subplan** (*Matthew Gage*) – **Change Plan**  
<https://uml.curriculog.com/proposal:2908/form>. Change required courses from specific courses to elective choices, and update the catalog description. [Motion to approve by Jeff Moore, seconded by Neil Shortland. Approved: Yes 8, No 0, Abstain 0.](#)
9. **Ph.D. Criminology and Justice Studies – all subplans (General Option, Terrorism Studies Option)** (*Jason Rydberg*) – **Change Plan**  
<https://uml.curriculog.com/proposal:2829/form>. Change one of the courses that is covered in the preliminary exam (i.e., removing a course that we cannot reliably offer every year); Add an oral presentation component to the comprehensive exam. The comprehensive exam is 75% written and 25% oral exam. The oral portion gives the student an opportunity to develop the skill of defending, and give faculty the opportunity to get a more holistic review of the student. The committee advised the department to create an assessment rubric for the oral exam. The change will be effective for Fall 2026. [Motion to approve by Saira Latif, seconded by Jeff Moore. Approved: Yes 8, No 0, Abstain 0.](#)

## 5. **Course Proposals** (*Noah Van Dam*)

### **Requests for New Courses**

1. **CIVE.5870 Introduction to Data Science for Engineers** (*John Ting*) – **New Course** <https://uml.curriculog.com/proposal:2845/form>. Introduction to data analytics with applications in civil and environmental engineering. Review of probability theory, uncertainty quantification, Monte Carlo Methods, fundamentals of unsupervised and supervised learning. Significant questions were raised about the content being very general with limited Civil Engineering content. The course would teach general Data Science content using Civil Engineering examples. Questions

were raised about why teach in engineering, whether the course should be a general engineering (ENGN) course instead, or whether the course name and/or content should reflect Civil Engineering more directly. The department hopes to attract students from across the college or university and provide students from across the different CIVE options and others a methods course. The methods are taught specifically within engineering contexts, rather than contexts that might arise in other colleges or disciplines. In addition, civil engineering students are generally limited to CIVE courses. Undergraduate students may only use CIVE 5000-level course to satisfy professional electives. Others in the college during the college approval process did not object so they want to keep the CIVE prefix. The committee also raised the point they would prefer to see a more robust syllabus, including items like grading information, schedule, or assessment methods. [Motion to approve by Ramanpreet Kaur, seconded by Jeff Moore. Approved: Yes 5, No 0, Abstain 3.](#)

2. **COMP.5900 Professional Experience in Computer Science** (*Tingjian Ge*) – **New Course** <https://uml.curriculog.com/proposal:2940/form>. This course provides graduate students with supervised industry experience in a professional computing environment. Students apply advanced concepts from computer science to real-world industrial challenges. The professional experience may take the form of a paid or unpaid internship, co-op assignment, or approved industry-based project. A work experience is a required component of this course. Work experiences must be directly related to the student's major field of study and an integral component of the curriculum. Students work under the joint supervision of an industry mentor and a faculty supervisor. Academic requirements are determined by the faculty supervisor and may include an experience plan, periodic progress reports, and a final report or presentation. A question was raised about how the number of credits between 1 and 3 would be determined. The supervising faculty member for the course would determine, but they would base their determination on the definition of a credit hour and the amount of work expected in the particular experience for the student. [Motion to approve by Saira Latif, seconded by Jeff Moore. Approved: Yes 8, No 0, Abstain 0.](#)
3. **BIOL.5250 Principles of Ecology** (*Ali Hamilton*) – **New Course** <https://uml.curriculog.com/proposal:2909/form>. The distribution and abundance of species reflect ongoing and historical environmental and biological processes. Lectures and discussions will introduce students to major themes in the broad discipline of ecology and explore population, community and ecosystem level ecology in an evolutionary context. In addition to fundamental theories and models, this course will explore emerging research and emphasize experimental approaches

in ecological research. This course is meant to increase offerings in a new area with recent faculty hires. It is planned to be a combined undergraduate and graduate course. The instructor gives different syllabi to students in each section, so the undergraduate information was not directly included in the provided syllabus. The committee stated this type of information would be helpful to include in the syllabus/documents provided to GPAC for their review. A question was raised about the differences between this course and a behavioral ecology course already in the catalog, but this course covers additional areas within ecology that go beyond behavioral ecology. This also focuses on just ecology when the principles of biology covers all areas of biology, which includes ecology but also many others. For the lab to meet outside it was asked what this might entail and how practical that is. Ecology needs to be done outside so there aren't other options, and it requires lots of car sharing. [Motion to approve by Eleanor Abrams, seconded by Neil Shortland.](#)  
[Approved: Yes 8, No 0, Abstain 0.](#)

4. **BIOL.5250L Principles of Ecology Laboratory** (*Ali Hamilton*) – **New Course**  
<https://uml.curriculog.com/proposal:2910/form>. As biologists, we seek to understand the complexity of life on earth. This lab is designed to give students hands on experience asking questions and designing experiments to address those questions. In addition to learning essential technical skills and methods used in a range of ecological research fields, students will gain experience visualizing data, interpreting results, and communicating science to others (both orally and through written work) to prepare them for future research careers. Ecology is best learned outside, immersed in the ecosystems of the region. As a result, ecology lab will meet outside many weeks during the semester. We will be conducting experiments and collecting data at several sites in the area to learn about the different types of New England ecosystems. [Motion to approve by Michael Ciuchta, seconded by Eleanor Abrams.](#)  
[Approved: Yes 8, No 0, Abstain 0.](#)
  
5. **BIOL.5850 Drawing Conclusions in Biology** (*Frederic Chain*) – **New Course**  
<https://uml.curriculog.com/proposal:2912/form>. Biologists from all disciplines require analytical skills to evaluate and interpret biological information. Navigating these data to build an accurate understanding of the natural world requires critical thinking and scientific literacy. This course explores and applies principles, concepts, and approaches used to drawing valid conclusions from various types of data and evidence in biology. We use real-world datasets and modern examples from the literature including research from UMass Lowell faculty and students that illustrate different types of experiments, data, and visualizations that address biological questions. The development of literacy skills will be scaffolded around current topics and interdisciplinary methods to analyze and interpret data in ecology,

evolution, and genetics. This is somewhat similar to the data course proposed in Civil Engineering, but focuses on different systems in biology. The course will take students through different types of data so students can become conversant in data analysis in many fields of biology. The committee commented this course looks to be at least 50% biology material with the additional data analysis techniques added.

Motion to approve by Neil Shortland, seconded by Michael Ciuchta. Approved: Yes 8, No 0, Abstain 0.

## Requests to Change Courses

6. **None**

### 6. **Discussion**

1. **Graduate Student Petitions** (*Noah Van Dam*) – <https://uml.curriculog.com/proposal:2700/form> Update status of information gathering after the December GPAC meeting. Jeff Moore will present an update at the March 23 meeting.

Motion to adjourn by Jeff Moore, seconded by Noah Van Dam. Meeting adjourned 5:09pm.

**Next GPAC Meeting:** Monday March 23, 2026 at 3:30-5:00pm in Alumni Hall 102.