

MINUTES OF THE GRADUATE COMMITTEE
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FRESNO
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Fresno, California 93740-8027
Office of the Academic Senate Ext. 8-2743

September 28, 2021

Members Present: M. López (Chair), K. Capehart, A. Hoskins, D. Lent, G. Sharma, R. Sias, and D. Walker

Member Excused: B. Sethuramasamyraja, J. Marshall (ex officio)

The meeting was called to order at 2:04 PM, by Chair López on Zoom.

- I. Minutes: MSC to revise and approve the Minutes of September 21, 2021
- II. Agenda: MSC to approve the Agenda for September 28, 2021
- III. Updates, Announcements, and Communications
 - A. Coordinators' meeting was conducted. Waiting for any updates from Jim Marshall.
- IV. Continued discussion: Athletic Training program change proposal
 - A. Recommendation to change the language to reflect that the board exam is the same as the credential exam.
 - B. Once accredited, they would have to change the catalog copy.
 - C. No additional concerns.
 - D. Voted to approve the program changes to athletic training with the request that they amend the catalog copy so that it is clear that the board exam is the same as the credential exam.
- V. New Discussion: International Affairs request to add Duolingo permanently
 - A. The International Affairs Office has submitted a formal request to accept Duolingo permanently.
 - B. Rationale: More affordable, easier to access, it would not replace the TOEFL but students have the option to take Duolingo as an option to let students take it to demonstrate English proficiency.
 - C. The committee is concerned that justification is strong but there is a lack of evidence on the validity of the exam within academic settings. Validity for students who passed Duolingo also succeeded in academic settings is lacking. Duolingo was useful in the context of COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., lack of access to testing spaces), but other exams now available for in-home completion.
 - D. The committee is concerned that Duolingo might not be comparable to the TOEFL and IELTS in terms of measuring academic-level fluency.

- Critics argue that Duolingo tests should not be relied on as a measure to use English in academic settings, especially at the graduate level. Need more evidence on the validity of Duolingo for English proficiency at the graduate school level.
- E. Some committee members also expressed that, since it is more affordable and accessible, it can be added as an option. Programs can perhaps try it out individually and decide. Moreover, all tests such as TOEFL and IELTS are questionable.
- F. The question is whether Duolingo provides a measure of how students will perform in terms of English proficiency within academic settings. So if the Graduate Committee approves it as of now, perhaps in the next 2 years we need to see more evidence on validity and revisit the decision to add it permanently or not. It is possible to get a base-level sense of whether Duolingo is an effective measure of English proficiency.
- G. The correlation between Duolingo and other tests (e.g. TOEFL) is 0.7. University to decide what is sufficient to ensure students will succeed in academic settings.
- H. In light of these concerns, we are leaning towards increasing accessibility for students. We can seek feedback from Jim Marshall to understand if programs can add an option for English proficiency. We can also email our concerns to Sarah Lam and seek more information on the validity and utility of Duolingo test. Based on Sarah Lam's response, we can decide if we need to meet again to discuss Duolingo. Perhaps we can set higher score requirements on Duolingo to admit International students. But English proficiency scores might be set by the university and not the committee or program. For English proficiency, Duolingo score is 110 for some programs. We can make sure that message goes out to all programs regarding the score needed. We also need to know why some programs have set higher scores than others.
- I. We also don't want to further promote money-making standardized tests. But we also need to explore the validity of Duolingo given that it might not be gauging the skills that students need to succeed in academic settings. Duolingo is completely computer-generated and not graded manually. We do not want to set up students for failure and hence it's important to ensure the English proficiency they need to succeed in academic settings. We need more data and information to make the decision regarding the permanency of Duolingo.

VI. MSC to adjourn at 3:00 PM.

The next scheduled meeting of the University Graduate Committee is Tuesday, October 5, 2021, at 2:00 p.m. on Zoom.

Agenda for October 5, 2021

- I. Approval of the Minutes from September 28
- II. Approval of the Agenda for October 5
- III. Updates and Announcements
- IV. Continued discussion: International Affairs request to add Duolingo permanently
- V. APM 233 -- copy edits
- VI. Discussion: Program Review of externally accredited programs