

14 April 2020

Dear graduate students, faculty, and graduate coordinators:

This memo describes several changes in the Graduate School's policies, procedures and deadlines as a response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Let me start by apologizing for not communicating sooner. My nature is to err on the side of caution, and thus I was reluctant to send out a memo until I knew for certain the available options and what the Graduate School could deliver. I realize that this lack of communication has caused angst and frustration for graduate students and graduate training faculty – for that I am sincerely sorry. The Graduate School will continue to make adjustments to policies and deadlines as needed to reflect the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education and research missions of WSU.

### **1. Policy on authenticating and archiving approval of theses and dissertations (also known as wet ink on cotton pages--WloCP)**

In the memo of 25 March, I indicated that the Graduate School would continue to require original ink signatures on 100% cotton paper (WloCP) for the purposes of authenticating a committee's approval of a student's master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, and delivering a document that met archival standards. The deadline for delivery of these cotton pages was extended to 8 May for several reasons, but one important reason was to give the Graduate School time to develop an electronic procedure that could replace the requirement for WloCP while: 1) retaining integrity of the committee approval process, 2) creating an archivable document, and 3) implementing a sustainable procedure that allowed the Graduate School staff to efficiently and accurately process the hundreds of thesis/dissertation documents received at the end of each semester.

An electronic procedure, to replace WloCP, is now within sight, using the GRM module (Graduate Research Management) in myWSU. *For all thesis and dissertation defenses conducted after 8 March, the requirement for WloCP can be replaced by an electronic approval process.* The Graduate School will be responsible for generating an archivable document from the approved electronic submission.

Development and implementation of the necessary GRM functionalities required team work and collaboration. I want to express my deep appreciation for the Graduate School programs staff, in particular Daniel Vickoren (supervisor for programs and graduation). This effort required an invaluable collaboration with Enterprise Systems within Information Technology Services, under the leadership of Dr. Sasi Pillay (Vice President and Chief Information Officer). Gary Saunders deserves a special shout-out for his support and creative problem-solving skills. This team kicked the implementation efforts into high gear so that we could roll this out as quickly as possible.

This electronic process for signature approval of a student's thesis or dissertation may be less than perfect at first. We know there are complications with providing non-WSU committee members access to forms in myWSU. We are working on that. There is going to be a learning curve. We are working on developing step-by-step training documents for students, faculty and graduate coordinators. We are rolling out this process much quicker, with less beta testing, than we normally would. I want to express appreciation for the College of Education and the Department of Psychology who have helped us test baby-steps in implementing this process. On Friday (10 April), we began beta-testing a general process

for faculty committee members to approve forms electronically through the GRM. This week, we began beta-testing the specific form for signature approval of theses and dissertations. *Our goal is to make this electronic process available to all students and their committees by 1 May 2020.*

Please stay tuned for further details. For now, my major take-home messages are as follows:

- 1) There is no compelling need to proceed with completion of WloCP for theses and dissertations – there is an alternative coming.
- 2) WloCP will still be accepted, but be realistic – the Graduate School office will not be open to traffic to accept these pages until 4 May at the earliest.
- 3) Do not violate the “Stay Home” order to collect signatures. There are better options, and the deadline is 8 May at the earliest, so please be patient!

The Graduate School’s acceleration to implement electronic processes, in response to COVID-19 and the “Stay Home” order, will have an impact beyond the thesis/dissertation signature pages. By Fall 2020, we hope to be ready to implement electronic (GRM) approval of most, if not all, forms by a student’s faculty advisory committee.

## **2. Extension of deadline for submission of final versions of the thesis and dissertation.**

The 25 March memo indicated that the deadline extension to 8 May was only for the WloCP submission. As the semester has unfolded, it is clear that additional unforeseen consequences of the “Stay Home” order have made it difficult for students to complete the usual, minor revisions to their thesis or dissertation without access to resources on campus. Therefore, the deadline extension is revised to include the electronic submission of the thesis or dissertation.

For clarification, for defenses completed from 9 March to 31 July, the deadline to submit all final documents associated with degree completion, including the electronic approval form in GRM (or WloCP if preferred) and the electronic submission of the thesis or dissertation, will be 8 May or fifteen working days after the date of the successful defense—whichever is later. Thus, this extended window to submit all documents includes exams in the interim exam period and the summer semester.

This extension for thesis/dissertation submission should not be construed as a change to the policy that committee members are expected to have read and given preliminary approval to these documents before signing the scheduling form. The intent of the policy remains in effect – that the thesis/dissertation should be in a nearly final version before the defense is held, and generally only minor revisions should be required after the student’s successful defense.

## **3. Policies changes on exam environment extended into Summer 2020**

In the memo of 18 March, I announced a *suspension* until 8 May of the policy that: 1) “at least one committee member must be physically present in the room with the student” or otherwise a proctor must attend the exam; and 2) the exam must be conducted “in an academic environment.” In accord with WSU policies for Summer 2020 instruction, *this suspension of policy is extended* until the end of the Summer 2020 interim exam period, 14 August.

## **3. Grading policies for 500-level courses**

The policy changes regarding the options to use P/F grading apply only to undergraduate students. Graduate students are expected to complete their 500-level course work for A-F grades as prescribed in the course’s description in the University catalog.

Faculty are strongly encouraged to use the grading options of X or I when appropriate if a student needs additional time to satisfactorily complete course requirements. If an incomplete (I grade) is assigned, the faculty member and student should complete the “Incomplete Grade Agreement” form to clearly document the requirements for resolution of the incomplete in a timely manner. The form is available here:

<https://gradschool.wsu.edu/documents/2014/12/incomplete-grade-agreement.pdf/>

Graduate students also have the option to use the petition process to withdraw from a course. Petitions will be accepted up to the final day of the semester (8 May). The form is available

here: <https://gradschool.wsu.edu/documents/2014/12/petition-to-add-or-drop.pdf/>

The same form can be used for graduate students to request the P/F grade option for undergraduate course work. However, if 300 and 400 level courses are completed P/F, these credits will not meet the requirements to be included as graded credit on the Program of Study.

#### **4. Commencement participation for students completing in the Spring interim period and Summer**

Normally, doctoral students who complete their final defense and degree requirements in the Spring interim period or the summer semester are not eligible to participate in the May commencement ceremony. Because the in-person commencement has been postponed, these students are welcome and encouraged to participate in the planned August commencement.

#### **Contacting the Graduate School.**

As always, feel free to reach out to the Graduate School if you have questions or concerns.

Email: [gradschool@wsu.edu](mailto:gradschool@wsu.edu)

Information and up-dates are provided on the announcements page of the Graduate School web site. Please check social media, Friday Focus and the GPSA Monday Minute for the schedule of up-coming Zoom “Office hours with the Dean.”

Best regards,

LMG

Lisa M. Gloss  
Dean of the Graduate School