

UNL Graduate Council Minutes  
November 6, 2025  
Location: Zoom  
2:30 p.m.

**Attending:** Rochelle Dalla, Christopher Bilder, Elizabeth Niehaus, Michelle Harvey, Can Vuran, Venn Jemkur, and Colten Skinner. Dean Hope presiding. Eva Bachman and Jason Carmichael from Graduate Studies.

**Absent:** Dai Shizuka, Tom Kubick, Frauke Hachtmann

1. **Approval of Minutes:**

- a. September 4, 2025: motion to approve, seconded, and passed unanimously.
- b. October 2, 2025: motion to approve, seconded, and passed unanimously.
- c. October 16, 2025: motion to approve, seconded, and passed unanimously.

2. **Proposal to create new specialization in Environmental Sciences in MS and PhD in Natural Resources Science:** Dean Hope introduced and provided a brief overview of the proposal. After a discussion of the proposal's workflow timeline, its educational goals, and presumed resources, a motion was made to approve, seconded, and passed unanimously.

3. **Proposed revision in English Language Proficiency Policy:** Dean Hope gave a brief reminder of previous discussion regarding this policy and the issues involved; this discussion is necessary because ETS is rescaling the TOEFL, which changes the scoring system on which our current policy is based, and many other tests have come into the marketplace that applicants are choosing. The Common European of Reference (CEFR) for languages provides a model for assessing levels of language proficiency that many are adopting to coordinate their test scoring system. Unfortunately, the information ETS provided to the Big Ten was less clear than we originally thought, and a follow-up meeting is scheduled with ETS and the Big Ten to provide clarity on the relationship of the new TOEFL scores to CEFR levels. It is not recommended to adopt a policy until this meeting occurs. Dean Hope asked the Council if they were comfortable adopting a policy that uses CEFR guidelines rather than setting specific scores, and whether our baseline score should be raised, lowered or stay the same. Discussion followed about reliability of test scores matching CEFR levels, preference for granular score requirements such as CEFR B2.1, whether there is strong motivation to adopt CEFR due to ambiguities discussed, whether CEFR could provide a benchmark to programs to determine what level they expect from their students. Decision about changes in policy was tabled until the next meeting in December but the general sense was that we may want to continue a policy based on specific test scores until the meaning of the CEFR levels becomes more clear.

4. **Any needed curriculum discussions:** None.

5. **Graduate Student Assembly Report:** President Jemkur reported that GSA is preparing to meet with President Gold, who is coming to campus and has invited the GSA Executive team to meet with him. They are prioritizing what to present to him to make strategic use of the limited time scheduled for the meeting.

6. **Announcements:**

- a. Dean Hope provided updates about support for students and programs provided by OGS given the stress raised by proposed budget cuts.

- b. Dean Hope provided an update on graduate commencement numbers.
- c. OGS continues to develop a better conflict resolution grievance process for graduate students. Dean Hope will keep the Council informed as it continues to progress.

Meeting adjourned at 3:21 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Jason Carmichael