Summary of Decisions – Graduate Programs – MAY 2018

Graduate program and course issues are addressed throughout the academic year as needed. Our primary assessment exercise occurs during a one-day faculty in-service Planning and Assessment Workshop held at the end of the school year. This workshop was held 7 May 2018, 8:30a – 3:00p.

Information used to support planning at the meeting:
IDEA surveys for individual courses and department summary
Enrollment, graduation, and placement for WATS graduate students: 2005-2017
Review of graduate student performance in qualifying exams, thesis and dissertation defenses, and the annual Graduate Student Research Symposium

1. Graduate Programs in Ecosystem Restoration

A graduate certificate in Ecosystem Restoration has been approved and implemented. Discussion continue with other faculty in QCNR regarding starting a broader program in ecosystem restoration.

2. Graduate Student Timelines and Standards

Following extensive input from past and current graduate students, we reviewed WATS standards and expectations for graduation timelines and standards. This conversation continued during the QCNR retreat on 16 August, 2020. There is a need for consistent and clearly expressed expectations regarding the thesis or dissertation defense and the PhD comprehensive exam. We also reviewed evidence that time to completion for either graduate degree is longer than desired.

There was a strong consensus that the timing of the comprehensive exam needs to be moved forward. Allowing the comprehensive exam (including proposal) to slide into later years ill serves the students and also makes it more difficult and costly to terminate or MS/A transfer a student who is not succeeding in their doctoral program. At the same time, the diversity of students and faculty approaches means that we need to go light on hard-and-fast requirements. The most important firm requirement is that the Comprehensive Exam explicitly has three parts that must be passed/approved: proposal, written, and oral. The most important strong recommendation is that the comprehensive exam be completed by the end of the third semester. Completing the exam after the third semester requires approval of the Department head (hopefully not that big a concern in the current administration).

ACTION: The WATS Graduate Student Handbook was updated December 2020 to reflect these changes.

Submitted by

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