

# Proposed Modification of Procedures for Documenting and Archiving Changes to the Graduate Handbook

## Background

The Graduate Handbook serves as the primary repository of policies and procedures that pertain to graduate students and postdoctoral scholars. Maintenance of the Graduate Handbook is the purview of the Graduate Council, who "... establish and publish rules governing graduate programs, including the revision and updating of the Graduate College Handbook in accord with policy changes approved by the Graduate Council and changes in Graduate Office Administration Procedures" (Sect. A.1.4 #3). As such, any substantive changes to the Handbook that could be interpreted as policy changes must be discussed, voted upon, and approved by the Graduate Council. This mirrors the shared governance procedures that the Faculty Senate facilitates with respect to the Faculty Handbook.

For the Faculty Handbook, documenting changes and archiving past versions is transparent. The Provost's office web page hosts the current Faculty Handbook (PDF), which is updated twice annually, and nearly 25 years of past Handbooks are archived on this site. Additionally, the current Faculty Handbook includes footnotes that designate when sections were approved or revised by the faculty senate. This provides a clear historical account of when policy changes were made.

Unfortunately, the Graduate Handbook has not been similarly documented. Past copies of the Graduate Handbook are not available on-line for comparison, maintenance of the current version as an HTML page is a more fluid file modality, and while a recent motion (2020) stipulates that policy decisions of the Graduate Council are summarized annually (see: <https://www.grad-council.iastate.edu/>), there is no equivalent mechanism for determining when, and by whom, changes to the Graduate Handbook were made.

This lack of historical documentation is problematic. As one example, I located past Graduate Handbooks from 2008 to 2020 on a monthly archival snapshot site: [wayback.archive-it](https://wayback.archive-it.org/)<sup>1</sup>. I then compared section 3.2 (Graduate Assistantships) across years, and found that wording in this section had changed sometime between April 2020 and August 2021. Specifically, the words 'employing unit' were replaced with 'appointing unit', and all reference to 'hire' or 'hiring' were deleted. These changes could be interpreted as a change in policy regarding how graduate students are classified, yet upon reviewing my personal notes our meetings, and all minutes posted on Council's website, none of these changes were discussed, voted on or approved.

## Motion 1

**I propose that the Graduate College revert to a PDF version of the Graduate Handbook which is updated annually, and that prior versions be placed on the Graduate College web page. Going forward, all changes to the Handbook should be documented using a footnote system similar to that used in the Faculty Handbook.**

## Motion 2

I propose a change of wording to section A.1.4 #3 to include (boldface below):

"3. To establish and publish rules governing graduate programs, including the revision and updating of the Graduate College Handbook in accord with policy changes approved by the Graduate Council and changes in Graduate Office administrative procedures. **Any alterations to the Graduate Handbook which could be interpreted as a policy change must be discussed with approved by the Graduate Council.**"

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<sup>1</sup>: [https://wayback.archive-it.org/org-169/20200101000000\\*/http://www.grad-college.iastate.edu/](https://wayback.archive-it.org/org-169/20200101000000*/http://www.grad-college.iastate.edu/)