

Texas A&M International University

University Graduate Council

Meeting Minutes from February 3, 2026

I. Call to Order

Dr. Lola Norris called the virtual meeting to order at 9:35 am via Teams.

II. Roll Call

Present: Asligul Berkday, Jeffrey Brown, José Cardona-López, George Clarke, Triana González-Valdez, José Seiba Moris, Paul Niemeyer, Lola O. Norris, Abhijit Patwardhan, Amanda Peña, Gloria Sánchez, Nicole Songstad, María D. Viloria, Anwen Yin, Haibo Wang,
Graduate School: Anna Buentello, Virginia Morales, Martha (Marty) Pérez
Absent: Youmna Deiri
No graduate student representative

III. Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the October 15, 2025, meeting had been emailed to the Council members prior to the present meeting. Dr. Norris reviewed the minutes. Dr. Brown motioned to approve, and Dr. Viloria seconded. The motion carried.

IV. Unfinished Business

- A. Dr. Norris updated the Council on the status of the revised Graduate Faculty Status Membership Categories that were approved by the Council at the October 15, 2025, meeting. Dr. Norris explained that, following recent discussions in the Deans' and Provost's Council, some minor changes were made, and that the third category would revert to being named Temporary rather than Visiting. Dr. Norris stated that she consulted with Associate Provost Dr. Ari González. The category changes will be presented at the first Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC) on February 6 for approval.
- B. Dr. Norris updated the Council on the approved Thesis Continuation Course GRAD 5101. Triana González-Valdez explained that the 1-hour Thesis course that was approved would appear in the catalog as an option for each individual program and not a course that required approval by the Graduate School.
- C. Time limitations for doctoral programs were discussed. Dr. Norris presented her research comparing different time limits for doctoral degrees at various Texas Universities, both peer and aspirational institutions. She explained that while there are differences, most universities she researched allow a time frame of 8-10 years. Ms. Triana González-Valdez explained that right now, the catalog states that graduate courses expire after 5 years, but there is no mention of doctoral courses. She recommended having as much information as possible on time limitations for doctoral courses in the catalog, as well as any policies or internal processes for possible extension of leave of absence.

There was discussion on individual programs having shorter timelines versus a more general Graduate School time limit. Dr. Norris recommended creating an ad hoc committee to further study this issue, prepare a catalog entry, and present it for a vote at the next meeting. Dr. Moris, Dr. Viloria, Ms. Triana González-Valdez, and Dr. Clarke volunteered to be on the committee.

V. New Business

Anna Buentello explained that the Duolingo English Test (DET) is accepted at many institutions worldwide and is a fast, safe, more convenient, and more affordable alternative for international students. Pricing is around \$70, whereas TOEFL and IELTS are \$250 and above. We would like to offer students another option for proving their English proficiency. TAMIU accepts 100 on the DET for undergraduate admissions. Comparisons with other institutions show a range of 110-120 for graduate admissions. A DET score of 115 was discussed.

Ms. Buentello explained that students who are required to submit proof of English proficiency are those who studied in non-English speaking countries other than the US and do not qualify for waivers. Dr. Moris spoke about the importance of these tests.

Dr. Viloria made a motion to require 115 on the DET for graduate admission. Nicole Songstad seconded. The motion carried.

VI. Reports

- A. Dr. Norris informed the Council that Graduate School forms are being updated. This is necessary to make them ADA accessible. A new form for Thesis/Dissertation Defense Announcement is being developed.
- B. The Thesis/Dissertation Manual is also being updated with the most recent policies.
- C. Dr. Norris reported on the ongoing updates to the Graduate School website to be in compliance with ADA before the April 24 deadline.

VII. Other Business

There was no other business.

VIII. Announcements

Gloria Sánchez from eLearning announced that the 16th Annual Learning Technologies Week would be held February 9-13, 2026, and invited everyone to attend and share this information with others who might be interested. There will be presentations by TAMIU faculty as well as two days of presentations by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Virginia Morales announced the Graduate School Open House on Thursday, March 5 in ZSC, Discovery TAMIU on Saturday, March 21 and Graduate Student Appreciation Week during the 1st week of April.

IX. Adjournment

Dr. Lola O. Norris adjourned the meeting at 10:33 am.