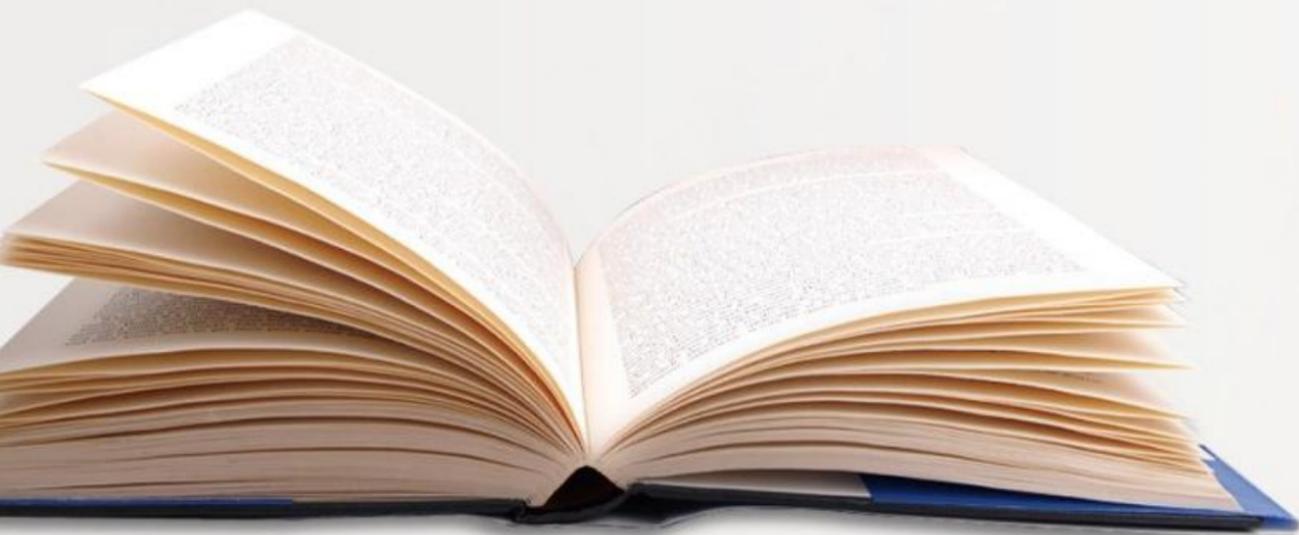# Graduate Studies Council

Report to Faculty Senate

Academic Excellence, Governance, and Graduate Education Integrity

Marcel M. Zondag, J.D., Ph.D., Chair, Graduate Studies Council

Western Michigan University | March 5, 2026

The Graduate Studies Council in Shared Governance

Standing Council of the Faculty Senate

Faculty-driven oversight of graduate policy and curriculum.

Operationalization of Academic Standards

Implementation via Memoranda of Agreement.

Continuous Review Process

Ongoing assessment of proposals, policies, and emerging issues.

Safeguarding Academic Integrity

Protection of rigor, credibility, and institutional standards.

Shared Governance Model

Faculty authority in graduate education policy formation.

Mandate Execution and Key Outcomes

Timely Curriculum Review

Average 23-day turnaround on graduate proposals, demonstrating consistent responsiveness and adherence to procedural timelines for curriculum approval.

Policy Clarification Achieved

Clarified PLA, catalog standards, and repeat course policy to ensure uniform interpretation and implementation across departments.

100% Award Review Completion

Completed full review of Graduate Student Award nominations, ensuring transparent evaluation and timely recognition of recipients.

Cross-Council Collaboration

Coordinated efforts among USC, IEC, and the Graduate College to align processes, share governance insights, and streamline decision-making.

Accreditation Alignment

Integrated HLC expectations into policies and procedures to maintain compliance and support institutional accreditation objectives.

Advancing the Strategic Priority of Academic Excellence

Strengthening Program Quality

Enhanced academic standards and rigorous curriculum oversight.

Supporting Degree Progression

Timely completion pathways for graduate students.

Enhancing Research Engagement

Expanded experiential and scholarly opportunities.

Incentivizing Excellence

Recognition of scholarly achievement and teaching innovation.

Integrating Support Ecosystems

Three Minute Thesis, Graduate Commons, professional development.

Future-Focused Academic Stewardship

Graduate-Specific AI Governance Pilot

Focus groups and policy sandbox for emerging technologies.

Transparency and Methodological Rigor

Evidence-based integrity standards in academic work.

Protection of Scholarly Standards

Safeguarding thesis, dissertation, and assessment quality.

Governance as Institutional Stabilizer

Graduate council provides academic and strategic continuity.

Iterative and Meticulous Oversight

Ongoing, intentional review processes.

Safeguarding the credibility, relevance, and rigor of graduate education at **WMU**.