

1 **John Jay College of Criminal Justice**
2 City University of New York
3 Committee on Graduate Studies
4

5 **Minutes of November 15, 2024**
6

7 The Committee on Graduate Studies held a remote meeting November 15, 2024, via Zoom.
8 Interim Dean Sidman called the meeting to order.
9

10 **Present:** Jana Arsovska, Marta Concheiro-Guisan, Kendra Doychak, Rebecca Weiss, Susan Kang,
11 Chitra Raghavan, Ian Seda Irizarry, Avijit Roy, Andrew Sidman, Robert Till, Lucia Velotti, Valerie
12 West, Ruby Aguirre.
13

14 **Absent:** Shweta Jain, Simone Martin-Howard, Daniel Matos, Dominic Stellini, Susan Pickman,
15 Ellen Sexton, David Shapiro.
16

17 **Non-Voting Members and Guests:** Maggie Arismendi, Sulema Ebrahim, Wynne Ferdinand,
18 Kathy Killoran, Patrizia Pelgrift, Dyanna Pooley, Gloria Gray, Jennifer Cadeau, Elaine Thompson,
19 Amir Rasulov, Purnima Taylor, Charlotte Walker-Said, Elena Lenihan, Soraya Cruz,
20

21 **I. Dean's Announcements – Interim Dean Sidman**
22

23 Interim Dean Sidman welcomed everyone and made two announcements:

24 1) the new graduate student orientation will take place on Monday, 13th January 2025
25 (students may arrive at 3pm for snacks and networking; the formal program will start at
26 5pm; the students will join the directors and advisors to learn about the specifics of the
27 program that they have chosen at 6pm); and 2) a reflection on the current political climate
28 – Interim Dean Sidman expressed concern about the potential direction of a second Trump
29 administration, especially regarding the president-elect's Cabinet choices. He links these
30 concerns to a broader issue: the erosion of democratic principles, which he believes is tied
31 to the decades-long decline of liberal arts education. He also emphasized that, while higher
32 education is focused on providing students with skills for successful careers, it also plays a
33 critical role in teaching the values essential to a democratic society—such as the importance
34 of rights, freedoms, and democracy. Finally, he calls for a renewed focus on these principles,
35 stressing the important role of education in shaping students as active and informed
36 citizens.
37

1 **II. Approval of the minutes of October 18, 2024.**
2

3 Interim Dean Sidman asked if there were corrections, comments or questions pertaining to
4 last month's minutes. There were none, so he called for a vote on the item.
5

6 **A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of October 18, 2024. The minutes**
7 **were approved unanimously with 11 votes in favor.**
8

9 **III. Presentation on New VMock Tool**

10 Dean Sidman invited the Director of the Career Learning Lab, Purnima Taylor to present the
11 new VMock Tool. Director Taylor introduced college assistant, Amir Rasulov, to guide the
12 audience through the new platforms within the Career Learning Lab. The first platform was
13 Handshake, which replaces the previous system, Simplicity, and helps students find a wide
14 range of employment opportunities, such as internships, part-time or full-time jobs,
15 research opportunities, and capstone projects. Handshake gives access to over 25,000
16 employers and removes geographic limitations, allowing students to explore jobs in diverse
17 locations, especially in industries with hubs outside of New York.

18 The second platform discussed was VMock, which provides students with 24/7 support for
19 creating resumes, cover letters, elevator pitches, and practicing industry-specific interviews.
20 Director Taylor explained that Amir would also demonstrate VMock from the student's
21 perspective to show how they can use it to enhance their career preparation.

22 Amir Rasulov introduced himself as a political science student at John Jay, and went on to
23 present a demonstration on VMock, a career tool that helps students with resume building,
24 cover letters, elevator pitches, and interview preparation. Amir emphasized the importance
25 of peer-led demonstrations, as students can relate better to each other's experiences. He
26 walked through VMock's features, starting with uploading a resume, which is then reviewed
27 by AI to suggest edits and improvements. VMock also offers templates tailored to specific
28 industries, such as federal, STEM, and finance.

29 Amir highlighted how VMock may help optimize resumes for specific job opportunities,
30 particularly through Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) that scan resumes for keywords.
31 Additionally, VMock provides an elevator pitch section to help students refine their
32 responses for interviews, offering feedback on content, delivery, and nonverbal cues. The
33 smart interview feature allows students to practice answering common employer
34 questions, simulating real interview scenarios. Amir stressed that VMock is available 24/7,

1 offering essential career preparation tools that students can use anytime, especially when
2 career counselors are not immediately available.

3 Director Taylor explained that the development of VMock was informed by input from John
4 Jay's career specialists, who shared resume and cover letter templates, as well as interview
5 questions commonly used with students. This data, along with industry-specific skill
6 baselines, was integrated into VMock's AI system to enhance its guidance.

7 She highlighted the creation of specialized templates for different fields, such as federal
8 employment and tech industries, which are crucial for John Jay students. Additionally,
9 liberal arts majors were considered to ensure all students have tailored support. Director
10 Taylor also emphasized that VMock helps guide students beyond what individual advisors
11 can offer, ensuring all students, regardless of their major, have access to resources that
12 support their career growth and success.

13 Professor Doychak asked the following question:- "You mentioned that students can choose
14 their career track, such as Federal, Finance, and other fields. I'm curious to know if
15 psychology and counseling are currently represented in the system for students, or if there
16 are plans to include them in the future."
17

18 Director Taylor responded that Social sciences, including psychology and counseling, were
19 covered within the system, and that, when students submit job descriptions for roles in
20 these fields, they will receive questions tailored to those specific areas. Additionally, when
21 students first log in, they are asked detailed questions about their career interests. This
22 helps VMock understand how to best support them. The platform also assesses their career
23 knowledge level—whether they are beginners, intermediate, or experts—allowing it to
24 provide guidance appropriate to their experience. This ensures the system meets students
25 where they are in their career journey.
26

27 Interim Dean Sidman commented how impressive the use of AI in VMock was. He
28 highlighted that students can upload job descriptions and receive tailored feedback on their
29 resumes and other materials, helping them better align their application with the specific
30 job. He found the system's capabilities remarkable, though initially overwhelming to grasp.
31

32 Professor West asked if there was a noticeable difference in the feedback given on resumes
33 that are reviewed by people versus those that are processed through the ATS (Applicant
34 Tracking System). Director Taylor responded that these are early days, but that the goal
35 would be for resumes reviewed through the ATS to be stronger because it would reduce

1 human error. VMock subtly guides students in several ways: it teaches them the right
2 resume format, helps them craft detailed bullet points, and educates them on industry-
3 specific skills and language. If students lack certain skills, VMock helps them figure out how
4 to acquire them. While VMock assists students up to a certain point (scoring up to 75%), it
5 still encourages meetings with advisors for further refinement. This allows career
6 counselors to focus on the content's specifics rather than the format or structure.
7 Director Taylor then ended by asking the audience at the meeting to spread the word about
8 this new tool to their students.

9
10 Associate Dean Killoran suggested that a more-in-depth session for the advisors would be
11 helpful to let them know about VMock. She will put together a list of folks who should be
12 invited. Purnima said that could definitely be set up.

13 14 **IV. Programs**

15 16 **A. Program Revisions**

17 18 **i. Revision of MA in Economics**

19 Interim Dean Sidman moved onto the first program revision and invited Prof. Seda to
20 discuss this further. Prof. Seda explained the changes to increase flexibility for students
21 by removing the requirement for the quantitative research methods course. The course
22 would become an elective option in the program. In place of that, the department
23 would offer a similar course focused on New York City economics, catering to those
24 interested in quantitative studies. The decision was made because the research
25 methods class is advanced, and many students are not interested in econometrics.
26 Students who wish to pursue econometrics can collaborate through co-authoring. This
27 change would also reduce the required credits from 21 to 18, providing more flexibility
28 for scheduling and faculty assignments. Associate Dean Killoran clarified that this meant
29 that the total number of credits would not change (still 36), but that 3 credits would be
30 moved to the elective portion of the program. Professor Seda confirmed.

31
32 **A motion was made and seconded to approve the revision of the MA in Economics. The**
33 **revision was approved unanimously with 12 votes in favor.**

34 35 **ii. Revision of the Advanced Certificate in Emergency Management Studies**

36 Professor Lucia Velotti was invited to present the revision for this advanced certificate
37 by Dean Sidman. She explained changes to the Advanced Certificate in Emergency

1 Management program by mentioning that two electives would be removed, with one
2 being incorporated into the required courses. Additionally, the one credit course would
3 be eliminated. These adjustments were made because the program previously did not
4 include mitigation and recovery in the required courses, which are essential
5 components of the comprehensive emergency management cycle. By making these
6 changes, the program would better reflect the proper structure and requirements of
7 emergency management education. The Advanced Certificate used to be 15 credits, but
8 it is now a 13-credit Certificate. Interim Dean Sidman praised this change and asked
9 whether there were questions or comments. Associate Dean Killoran added that there
10 was a need for more detailed admission information in the Bulletin to improve clarity
11 and linkages to the graduate studies admission webpage. She also highlighted the
12 importance of adding a paragraph to the Bulletin for the advanced certificate program,
13 specifying which students must follow the new version of the program and which can
14 still complete the old version. This approach would ensure clearer communication of
15 program requirements.

16
17 **A motion was made and seconded to approve the revision of the Advanced Certificate in**
18 **Emergency Management Studies. The revision was approved unanimously with 12 votes in**
19 **favor.**

20
21 **B. Course Revisions**

22
23 **i. CRJ 779 The Female Offender in Western Society**

24
25 Dean Sidman introduced the next items that were up to a vote, and welcomed Professor
26 West to provide a vision for CRJ 779. Professor West illustrated that the goal was to update
27 outdated course descriptions and names, some of which had not changed since their
28 inception. One example was the course proposal for "Perspectives on Gender and Crime,"
29 which aims to be more inclusive and allow for deeper intellectual engagement, while also
30 modernizing the language to avoid sounding outdated. Dean Sidman praised the changes to
31 the course.

32
33 **A motion was made and seconded to approve the course revision for CRJ 779 The Female**
34 **Offender in Western Society. The revision was approved unanimously with 12 votes in favor.**

35
36 Interim Dean moved onto the next revisions and Associate Dean Killoran introduced
37 Professor Doychak whom would discuss them.

- 1 ii. **PSY 716 Assessment and Counselling of the Juvenile Offender**
- 2 iii. **PSY 754 Advanced Forensic Assessment**
- 3 iv. **PSY 774 Advanced Issues in Victim Counselling and Psychotherapy**

4 Professor Doychak explained the proposed changes that involves three updates for the
5 following Psychology courses:

6 **PSY 716:** The title will be changed from "Assessment and Counseling of the Juvenile
7 Offender" to simply "Counseling of the Juvenile Offender" to reduce student confusion, as
8 the course does not fulfill an assessment requirement as students expect.

9 **PSY 754:** The prerequisite/corequisite course "Psy 779, Brain and Behavior" will be removed
10 for the "Advanced Forensic Assessment" course, as it is not necessary and serves as a
11 barrier to enrollment.

12 **PSY 774:** Two of the four prerequisites for the "Advanced Issues in Victim Counseling and
13 Psychotherapy" course will be removed, with the remaining ones listed as suggested rather
14 than required.

15 Associate Dean Killoran wondered about the language regarding "700" or the equivalent,
16 and she wondered whether it should be taken out, unless there was an equivalent?
17 Professor Doychak mentioned that there was no equivalent and agreed with Associate Dean
18 Killoran that it should not be included from the new pre-requisites.

19
20 Student Ruby Aguirre suggested updating the course description for 774 to better reflect
21 the collaborative and debriefing aspects of the course, particularly regarding current
22 therapeutic practices and services being provided to clients. Additionally, Ruby
23 recommended noting that the course is offered only once a year, along with an explanation
24 for this scheduling limitation, as it is a required course for completing the program.
25 Professor Doychak acknowledged the concerns and explained that the course is offered less
26 frequently due to its supervision-based nature and the need for qualified instructors. She
27 agreed that the course should be advertised more clearly, especially regarding its limited
28 availability in certain semesters. She also planned to discuss with other directors the
29 possibility of revising the course description to incorporate the feedback provided.
30 Interim Dean Sidman called for a vote of the three revisions as a slate.

31

1 **A motion was made and seconded to approve these three PSY revisions as a slate. The**
2 **motion passed unanimously with 10 votes in favor. The slate also passed unanimously with**
3 **10 votes in favor.**

4

5 **C. Graduate Faculty Approvals**

6 **i. CRJ-MA**

- 7 1. Joseph Pascarella
- 8 2. Rene Ropac
- 9 3. Erious Johnson

10

11 Interim Dean Sidman introduced the final item requiring a vote and wondered whether
12 there were comments or questions regarding the CVs of three instructors for the Criminal
13 Justice Master's program.

14

15 **A motion was made and seconded to approve these three CRJ-MA faculty members as a**
16 **slate. The motion passed unanimously with 10 votes in favor. The slate also passed**
17 **unanimously with 10 votes in favor.**

18

19 **V. DRAFT Writing Across the Curriculum Guidelines: Feedback to date by Interim Dean**
20 **Sidman**

21 Interim Dean Sidman presented proposed revisions to the "Writing Across the Curriculum"
22 guidelines, which were originally created in 1997. These revisions aim to better support
23 writing development at all course levels, emphasizing writing as both a process and a
24 content-based skill. Key principles include the idea that all faculty contribute to writing
25 improvement but are not solely responsible, writing should be explicitly taught in all
26 disciplines, and that reflective writing practices help build transferable skills. The revisions
27 also emphasize the importance of providing feedback, using rubrics for high-stakes writing,
28 and informing students about writing resources and ethics.

29 Interim Dean Sidman also highlighted the need for a shift in how writing is integrated across
30 all course levels, with writing expectations increasing as students advance. He stressed that
31 these guidelines should be adopted and supported by both faculty and students to be
32 effective, especially as writing standards are often underdeveloped at the graduate level.
33 Feedback on these guidelines is encouraged, as they aim to address gaps in writing skills
34 development, ultimately benefiting both undergraduate and graduate students.

1 Associate Dean Killoran highlighted the value of the revised "Writing Across the Curriculum"
2 guidelines as a useful tool for new faculty. She pointed out that the guidelines provide
3 practical examples of language that can be used in writing assignments and syllabi, helping
4 faculty design better assignments. She suggested that these guidelines will be more
5 effective than the current "4 pages of writing" memo often shared with new faculty. By
6 incorporating this language consistently in syllabi, students will better understand writing
7 expectations, leading to improved learning outcomes.

8
9 Professor West wondered whether there might be a corresponding increase in support for
10 the Writing Center focused on professional activity. Interim Dean Sidman explained that
11 there were ongoing efforts to improve student support in areas like writing and quantitative
12 reasoning (QR). He highlighted the need for additional resources at student support centers,
13 such as the Writing Center and the Math Science Resource Center, to better serve all
14 students, including graduate students, which he notes is currently lacking. While he did not
15 provide a concrete solution yet, he acknowledged the importance of expanding these
16 resources to support student learning in these key areas. Professor West added that, while
17 it is good to have guidelines, it is also important to receive training in how to impart those
18 skills to the students in the context of one's academic discipline, rather than writing
19 specifically for the field. Interim Dean Sidman said there was also ongoing efforts to devise a
20 plan for increasing writing instruction across the curriculum. He emphasized that this is not
21 something to be voted on soon but is part of a broader initiative that includes enhancing
22 resources for learning centers and expanding faculty development. While his office already
23 supports faculty development related to the writing program, he acknowledged that more
24 faculty development will be needed as this work progresses. Sidman stressed his approach
25 of seeking widespread feedback before implementing changes.

26
27 Interim Dean Sidman opened the forum to questions, and he gave the floor to the graduate
28 representative from the Student Council, Ruby Aguirre who introduced herself, fellow
29 council members, Elena Lenihan and Roy Avijit. They shared their goal of increasing
30 graduate student representation on the Council to ensure student voices are heard. Ruby
31 announced a graduate event on November 20th, a non-alcoholic "paint and sip" mixer with
32 mocktails, food, and a vendor. She also mentioned plans for an interdisciplinary panel on
33 December 4th, where professionals or faculty members would discuss the job market and
34 career insights. Additionally, an open forum for graduate students will be held on December
35 4th to address student concerns in a safe, supportive space.

36

1 Interim Dean Sidman asked whether there were other announcements, but there were
2 none, so he adjourned the meeting.

3

4 The meeting concluded at 13:47.

5

6 Submitted by,

7 Patrizia Pelgrift, scribe