



March 15, 2021

Dr. Karen P. DePauw
Vice President and Dean for Graduate Education
Virginia Tech Graduate School
Mail Code: 0325

Dear Dean DePauw,

The ASPECT PhD program will fulfill the new **Inclusion and Diversity Requirement** (pursuant to the resolution adopted by the Commission on Graduate Studies and Policies) by implementing the plan listed below.

It is also important to note that, in the context of the ASPECT PhD program, many of the stipulations listed below have already been in place for several years. ASPECT students have been active participants in inclusion and diversity initiatives and activities, inside and outside the ASPECT program, since 2008 (the year the program was launched).

ASPECT Plan for Inclusion and Diversity Component of ASPECT Program

1. Every incoming ASPECT PhD student will participate in an hour-long session led by the ASPECT Program director and the ASPECT Core faculty member serving as the ASPECT Inclusion and Diversity Coordinator on matters of Inclusion and Diversity as part of the two to three hour-long orientation session that must be attended by all incoming ASPECT PhD students and that is typically scheduled by ASPECT every August prior to the start of the Fall semester. During this session, matters pertaining to ways, methods, and expectations to achieve an affirming, inclusive, and diverse education at Virginia Tech and in the context of the ASPECT program will be introduced, explained, and discussed. Students will also be given copies of Inclusion and Diversity affirming documents provided by the University, the Graduate School, and the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences at Virginia Tech. The students will also be asked to sign a form (filed in the ASPECT office) stating that they have received from ASPECT the relevant documents during this session.
2. Every incoming ASPECT PhD student, during their first Fall semester, must sign up for the required core ASPECT course ASPT 6104—Interdisciplinary Methodology in ASPECT. In this course, several sessions (of three hours each) and themes are directly dedicated to matters of Inclusion and Diversity. Theoretical literatures related to gender, race,

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indigeneity, ableism, sexuality, LGBTQ matters, among other areas of emphasis, are presented and discussed during these sessions. Among some of the required and recommended texts in the course read are: Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*; Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*; Edward Said's *Orientalism*; W.E.B. DuBois's *The Souls of Black Folk*, or Eve Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet*. In rare cases, an incoming ASPECT doctoral student will start the program in the Spring semester. In this case, the student is unable to take ASPT 6104 until her/his second semester in ASPECT. In such a situation, the student will be asked to purchase two of the above-listed books (list can vary from year to year) and read them in her/his first semester in the program.

3. During what is normally their third semester of coursework in the ASPECT doctoral program, ASPECT PhD students must sign up for the required ASPT 6904 course— Professional Development in ASPECT. One of the main objectives of this course is to carefully address issues of scholarly and research integrity and ethics, academic and scholarly professionalism, and holistic approaches to an affirming educational as well as scholarly environment aware of questions and concerns related to inclusion and diversity in higher education. The course is a required core course in ASPECT offered every year (once a year), in the Fall semester, and taught by an ASPECT core or affiliated faculty member at Virginia Tech. Full time ASPECT doctoral students normally take this course in their third semester of coursework in the ASPECT program. Part-time students may take this course later on, but always prior to writing a dissertation proposal. A minimum of three sessions (nine hours) in this course are dedicated to the Scholarly Ethics and Integrity topics mentioned above.
4. Every ASPECT PhD student must earn a passing grade in both ASPT 6104 and ASPT 6904 in order to be allowed to move forward with their Program of Study in ASPECT. No ASPECT student will be allowed to defend her/his dissertation proposal if the student's plan of study is not approved by her/his proposed dissertation committee members, the ASPECT director, and the Graduate School and if the courses listed on the plan of study (including ASPT 6104 and ASPT 6904) show a failing grade. For ASPECT PhD students, core courses such as ASPT 6104 and ASPT 6904 cannot be taken Pass/Fail. Given that inclusion and diversity concerns and questions are key components of both ASPT 6104 and ASPT 6904, no ASPECT PhD student will be able to move forward to the dissertation proposal writing and defense stage without having participated in the relevant activities with regards to inclusion and diversity offered in these two courses.
5. The course syllabi for both ASPT 6104 and ASPT 6904 (both of which, again, are required courses) will contain and highlight the following statement: "ASPECT has been and remains committed to Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity in all its areas of activity, including teaching, research, outreach, recruitment, professional training, service, and extracurricular initiatives. ASPECT is committed to Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity: a) through its faculty, staff, and students, who have been active participants in inclusion

and diversity initiatives and activities, inside and outside of the ASPECT program, since 2008 (the year the program was launched); b) through the empirical, theoretical, and methodological inter-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary focus of its curriculum, which pays attention to several critical, transnational, and often non-Western centric approaches, broadly defined; and c) through its professional training activities, faculty and student service, and extracurricular engagements across the Virginia Tech campus. As such, ASPECT values, respects, and strives to embody the University's Principles of Community in all its initiatives and activities.

6. The ASPECT program director, the ASPECT Core faculty member serving as the ASPECT Inclusion and Diversity Coordinator, or the ASPECT program assistant will announce various Inclusion and Diversity activities, events, workshops, and scholarly/pedagogical opportunities offered by the Graduate School, the University, or the College to all ASPECT PhD students via email (ASPECT student email listserv), provided that the Graduate School, the University, or the College notifies ASPECT of such activities, events, workshops, and opportunities in a timely fashion. ASPECT PhD students are always encouraged to be active participants in these activities and events.

I believe this plan meets the Graduate School's new Inclusion and Diversity requirement as stipulated by the Commission on Graduate Studies and Policies, Resolution 2017-18A. Please let me know if you have any question.

Sincerely,



François Debrix
ASPECT Program Director