Graduate Council (GC)

Procedures for Submitting Proposals for Graduate Programs and Undergraduate/Graduate Hybrid Degree Programs

Approved by GC on November 29, 2023

Policy History:

January 19, 2010: T**he Graduate and Research Council (GRC) approved the policy for:** "*Procedures for Submitting Proposals for Graduate Emphasis Areas and Graduate Programs*".

January 6, 2020: Links in the policy were updated.

December 16, 2022: The policy was revised and approved under the new title "Procedures for Submitting Proposals for Graduate Programs and Undergraduate/Graduate Hybrid Degree Programs". The Graduate Council added language on undergraduate/graduate hybrid degree programs (HDPs). Specifically, a policy for Establishing HDPs was included. In addition, language for establishing emphasis areas in the context of the Interim Individual Graduate Program was removed. For the Proposal format for New Emphasis Areas, please refer to the Process for Establishing Concentrations and Designated Emphasis within Graduate Degree Programs

Background:

In 2003, the Interim Individual Graduate Program was put in place at UC Merced. This umbrella program contained several disciplinary and interdisciplinary emphasis areas with individualized program requirements. The intention of this program was to incubate graduate program areas to the point where they were ready to become stand-alone graduate programs. Faculty members had to submit proposals to create new emphasis areas within the interim program, or to convert existing emphasis areas into stand-alone graduate programs. In 2018, the last program was moved out of the Interim Individual Graduate Program category.

Over the years, as the campus matured and the number of faculty grew, the need for establishing graduate programs via the incubator phase of an emphasis area has diminished. Academic units have the structures and capacities in place to support the development of full graduate programs, and therefore the incubator route is being abolished.

In 2022 longstanding considerations and demand for HDPs, specifically combined bachelor's and master's degree programs, became concrete. Typically, such HDPs are offered as a combined bachelor's and master's

degree, for various reasons, which include that such HDPs:

i) may be structured such that obtaining the graduate degree becomes more affordable than a standalone graduate degree; thereby

ii) provide a broader student population opportunity to prove themselves at the graduate level and obtain graduate degrees; and hence

iii) promote more diversity in careers requiring advanced academic degrees, including the professoriate.

In response to these considerations and the demand, the policy was revised to include language on and a policy for establishing HDPs.

Definitions:

- **Hybrid Degree Program (HDP)**[1] - Undergraduate/Graduate hybrid degree programs are programs that allow undergraduate students to complete undergraduate and graduate programs simultaneously.
- **Joint Program**[2]
    - **Joint Degree Program** - a program that is offered collaboratively by two or more institutions and leads to the award of a single degree issued jointly by participating institutions.
    - **Dual Degree Program** - a program of study offered collaboratively by two institutions that leads to the award of two separate degrees from each of the participating institutions.
- **Master's Plan I (Thesis)**[3] – In addition to the thesis, a minimum of 24 semester units in approved courses is also required, at least 20 of which must be earned in 200-series graduate-level courses exclusive of credit given for thesis research and preparation. A general examination is also required.
- **Master's Plan II (Comprehensive Examination or Capstone/Culminating Project)**[4] - In addition to the comprehensive examination or capstone/culminating project, a minimum of 24 semester units in approved courses, at least 20 of which must be from graduate-level courses in the 200 series.
- **Western Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC)**[5] – UC's accrediting body

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[1] https://www.ucop.edu/institutional-research-academic-planning/_files/compendium_sept2014.pdf, page 10.
[2] https://senate.universityofcalifornia.edu/_files/committees/ccga/ccga-handbook.pdf, page 83.
[3] https://senate.ucmerced.edu/sites/senate.ucmerced.edu/files/page/documents/uc_merced_gpph_ay23-24_gc_approved_5.19.23.pdf, page 42.
[4] https://senate.ucmerced.edu/sites/senate.ucmerced.edu/files/page/documents/uc_merced_gpph_ay23-24_gc_approved_5.19.23.pdf, page 42.
[5] https://www.wscuc.org/

responsible for reviewing substantive changes in educational programs, delivery modalities, instructional locations, scope of offerings, and control of the institution. WSCUC defines substantive change as "one that may significantly affect an institution's quality, objectives, scope, or control." Though limited, the circumstances that most often trigger substantive change reviews for UC include proposal of new programs in which 50% or more of instruction is offered off-campus or online and programs at a degree level for which the campus does not have general authority.

Process:

Faculty planning the development of HDPs are encouraged to engage in a conversation with the Graduate Council (GC) and the Undergraduate Council (UGC), the Vice Provost and Dean for Graduate Education (VPDGE), the Vice Provost and Dean for Undergraduate Education (VPDUE), and with the campus's Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) and Substantive Change Coordinator early in the development process of the program proposal. Such consultation will help guide the program development and allow the committee(s) to plan for the review of the proposed program.

For new graduate programs as well as new HDPs, proposals should be written to make the case that 1) the proposed program fits at UC Merced; 2) that there is demand for the proposed program in CA and society at large; 3) that there are viable career paths for graduates of the program; and 4) the proposing graduate group has adequate resources (i.e. intellectual, personnel, space, and funding), plans, and procedures to grow a UC quality graduate program or HDP. Proposals for new graduate programs or HDPs should demonstrate growth to the point of being ready to service a full-fledged graduate program or HDP.

Proposals are first reviewed internally at UCM. Once approved, they are then submitted to the UC Coordinating Committee on Graduate Affairs (CCGA). Proposals for new graduate programs, and HDPs, are also screened by the Western Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC). Both of these bodies must approve new graduate programs before students may be admitted and degrees conferred. CCGA and WSCUC each have their own guidelines for preparing graduate program proposals. While these guidelines are similar in many respects, the proposal formats are different. Procedures for writing and submitting CCGA and WSCUC proposals are as follows.

1. For new graduate programs, proposing faculty members should write a CCGA proposal in accordance with instructions and guidelines found in the CCGA Handbook. https://senate.universityofcalifornia.edu/_files/committees/ccga/ccga-handbook.pdf.
2. Proposals for HDPs must meet the standards set forth for:

a. stand-alone undergraduate degree program proposals, as specified in Academic Degree Programs: UGC Review/Approval Policy
b. stand-alone graduate degree program proposals, as specified in the CCGA Handbook and the Compendium (Section II.B1. Establishment of New Graduate Degree Programs, and Appendix A of this document), and
c. additional standards specific to the combination of the two degrees as set forth in this policy, specifically Appendix A.

3. Policies and procedures should conform to policies and procedures detailed in the UCM Graduate Advisors Handbook: http://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/sites/graduatedivision/files/public/documents/UCMGraduateAdvisorHandbook.pdf.
   Graduate groups may impose additional or more stringent policies and procedures, but they cannot conflict with or diminish those already detailed in the Graduate Advisors Handbook.
4. In the Bylaws, the structures of one or more faculty committees (internal to the graduate program) should be outlined regarding who is responsible for curriculum and program assessment and ensuring adherence to current substantive change policy in consultation with the campus's ALO.
5. Proposing faculty members should contact the WSCUC ALO, who will identify a WSCUC Substantive Change Specialist to work with faculty members on translating the CCGA proposal into the corresponding WSCUC proposal.
6. Proposing faculty members should work with Administration to identify and appoint a Lead Dean for the proposed graduate program (e.g., the Dean of the School that is most closely associated with the proposed program). The Lead Dean is appointed by Chancellor.
7. Proposals should include Program Learning Outcomes, a Curricular Map, and an Assessment Plan as WSCUC instruments. The Program Learning Outcomes should be posted to the graduate program's website, once the graduate program, or HDP, is approved by CCGA.
8. The proposal should be voted on and approved by faculty members of the proposed graduate program, or proposed HDP. Proposing faculty members should also consult with other faculty groups that could be affected by the proposed graduate program. Consultation may include informal communication and solicitation of letters of support from consulted faculty groups, which can be included in the proposal.
9. Proposals are ultimately submitted to the Academic Senate Office by the Lead Dean of the proposed graduate program. Submissions should include a transmittal letter with the result of above-mentioned faculty vote and consultation process, plus a letter of recommendation from the Lead

Dean regarding academic resources and support for the proposed program. The Academic Senate Office transmits the proposal to GC (for academic review), the Committee on Academic Planning and Resource Allocation (CAPRA), the Executive Vice Chancellor (EVC, for budgetary review), and the Vice Provost and Dean for Graduate Education (VPDGE). In case of a HDP proposal, the Academic Senate Office also transmits the proposal to the UGC and the Vice Provost and Dean for Undergraduate Education (VPDUE), with the request to UGC and GC to form a joint subcommittee to review the proposal. GC receives comments from CAPRA and the VPDGE, and in the case of a HDP, also from UGC and the VPDUE. GC may request revisions from proposing faculty members. GC ultimately votes to approve or reject the CCGA proposal.

10. Approved CCGA proposals are submitted to CCGA for final UC review and approval (see the CCGA Handbook for their review procedures). Simultaneously with the submission of proposals to CCGA, the corresponding WSCUC proposal should be submitted to WSCUC if necessary. The procedure for submitting to CCGA is detailed in Section VI.D.5-9 of the Compendium (copied here):
    a. Academic Senate approval is referred to the VPDGE for comment and transmittal to the EVC. A copy of GC approval is also sent to the Chair of the Divisional Academic Senate for the information of the Divisional Council.
    b. The EVC reviews the proposal and consults with appropriate members of the administration to determine if the degree program will be supported by the campus, including providing appropriate resources, and advises the Chancellor.
    c. The Chancellor transmits campus approval and recommendation to the Office of the President for system-wide approval. Copies are also sent to the VPDGE, the Chair of the Divisional Senate, and the Chair of the Graduate Council; and for HDPs, also to the VPDUE and the Chair of the UGC.
    d. The GC Chair transmits the proposal to the CCGA for system-wide Academic Senate approval.[6]

    When approved by the Office of the President and system-wide Academic Senate, the Chancellor and/or Chair of the Divisional Academic Senate notify the GC Chair and VPDGE who notifies the proposing faculty, and Offices of Accounting & Financial Services, Admissions, University

[6] Note on hybrid programs: As stated in the Compendium, once approved at the campus level, also any hybrid program proposal is to be forwarded to CCGA for review. In case the proposed hybrid program involves the establishment of a new graduate program, the proposal will undergo CCGA review in the same manner standalone graduate programs are reviewed by CCGA. In cases where the proposed hybrid program is simply a new articulation between an existing bachelor's degree program and an existing graduate degree program, CCGA may decide to provide pro forma concurrence with the campus action, unless it judges that there are particular issues that justify a more extended review.

Communications, Registrar, Accreditation Liaison Officer, and Planning and Resource Management. In the case of HDPs, the Senate office also notifies the UGC Chair and the VPDUE.

Appendix A: Policy for the Establishment of Undergraduate/Graduate Hybrid Degree Programs[1,2]

Developed and approved by GC: November 29, 2023

1. Each program at UCM can provisionally admit incoming students to an Undergraduate/Graduate Hybrid Degree Program (HDP) at any time. HDP is the official language used by the UC Compendium for coupled degree programs that allow students to complete undergraduate and graduate programs simultaneously. HDP do not necessarily reflect programs characterized by blended instructional modalities. Likewise, HDPs do not necessarily reflect Dual Degree programs and Joint Degree Programs, which are programs offered in collaboration with other institutions that lead to the award of separate and single degrees, respectively. Admission criteria to the HDP must be established by each program and then approved by the Graduate Council. In general, these criteria should exceed the normal admission requirements set by the specific program. UCM programs proposing a HDP must communicate the program's requirements to the Admissions Office and offer eligible students consultation on the HDP.

2. Admitted students maintain their provisional enrollment in the HDP if their cumulative GPA exceeds at least 3.3. A program may set its minimum GPA level for eligibility to their HDP higher than 3.3. If students fail to maintain the minimum GPA standard, they are disenrolled from the HDP but are eligible to re-enroll if their cumulative GPA subsequently exceeds this minimum level for two consecutive semesters. The same condition would be applied to all new enrollments requested after freshman entry, including transfer students.

3. A student, who is provisionally enrolled and in good standing in their HDP programs, will transition to full enrollment at the start of the first semester by which they have completed 48 units or more of coursework towards their Bachelor's degree.

4. HDP students must fulfill all the requirements set for their undergraduate degree programs at UCM without any modifications, except as specified in this policy regarding the counting of graduate level units toward their undergraduate degree. In particular, the HDP students must meet the specific program requirements set for the number of total units and for units within the major. HDP students would automatically become graduate students after receiving a Bachelor's degree.

5. HDP programs allow for up to 12 units of graduate level coursework to count toward their

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[1] Adapted from UC Riverside's Policy: https://ucmerced.box.com/s/4zu5ddroehrmcj97670u1cvb5bo4q5l6.

[2] Terminology: The term "Undergraduate/Graduate Hybrid Degree Programs" is the official language used for these programs in the UC Compendium. To be consistent with the compendium this official UC language was adopted in this policy. In the day-to-day use the term "Hybrid" may be substituted with terms like "4+1", "Blended", "Coupled", "Merged", "Tandem", or other terms of synonymous meaning.

undergraduate degree requirements.[3] Each HDP program sets its upper limit of graduate level units which can be counted towards the Bachelor's degree, but the upper limit should not exceed 12 units, unless otherwise approved by exception by the Graduate Council (GC). This number of units that can be so counted may further be limited as follows.

- Each HDP must establish a minimum threshold of upper division major units taken beyond which the counting of graduate units toward both the undergraduate and graduate degree becomes an option.
- Each HDP can also specify that only a subset of the upper-division courses in the major are eligible for substitution by graduate courses that can be counted toward the Bachelor's degree.

In determining these limits, programs are to consider which skills and knowledge provided at the upper division undergraduate level are essential and potentially not obtained through graduate level courses.

6. The graduate level courses counted for the undergraduate degree and the graduate degree may not be applied in any manner to reduce the following requirements:
   - General education requirements
   - Lower division requirements
7. Each HDP program must specify the requirements for obtaining the graduate level degree, in accordance with the policy for establishing stand-alone graduate degree programs.
8. In their proposal to establish an HDP, programs must address the financial impacts to their students. They must (a) address student loan impact, (b) if available provide data from comparison programs, and (c) outline measures to attain borrowing levels and repayment rates that meet UC Merced standards.[4]
9. Proposals to establish an HDP must carefully address the resource requirements. Points to pay particular attention to include:
   a) Proposals require a statement on the financial impact of their program on university public

[3] While some UC schools limit the number of units of undergraduate level coursework that are double counted toward the Master's degree, the policy here is distinct in that it limits the number of graduate level units that may be doubled counted toward the undergraduate degree.

[4] At the time this policy was developed, UC Merced does not have standards for borrowing levels and repayment rates. Policies may be developed by the Senate and administration. However, should a HDP be proposed prior to the development of such standards, proposers should demonstrate reasonable effort to meet this criterion.

goods (e.g., Library).

b) Proposals to establish an HDP that involve a thesis track (Plan I Masters) should address the impacts the program would have on research infrastructure.

c) Proposals to establish an HDP should discuss if Teaching Assistants are anticipated to be required for delivering the graduate courses in which HDP students may enroll in accordance with the policy on graduate students teaching graduate students.

10. Proposals for an HDP in collaboration with another institution (e.g. other UC campus or CSU campus) need to also consider guidelines for Dual Degree Programs or Joint Degree programs as provided in the CCGA Handbook.

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