GRADUATE COUNCIL (GC)

Process for Establishing Concentrations and Designated Emphasis within Graduate Degree Programs

Approved by Graduate Council on December 18, 2015
Approved by Division Council on March 2, 2016
Corrected on February 4, 2020[1]

1) Introduction

a) Graduate programs may want formal acknowledgement on student transcripts of specific, focused coursework completed within the graduate program, or formal acknowledgement on the transcript of additional graduate coursework and other requirements met at the University of California, Merced within a specific field of study outside of a student's graduate program. For example, such acknowledgement may be necessary when applying for a teaching position at a community college, or may be desirable as a complement to information available in a letter of recommendation prepared by the student's advisor.

b) Such formal acknowledgment is established by a graduate program for all students within the program, rather than on a case-by-case basis, via the mechanisms described herein. Such acknowledgement is only available for programs that have been subject to review and approval by Graduate Council and, as necessary, CCGA. There are two options (i.e., Concentrations and Designated Emphases). There is no option for a "custom" concentration or emphasis.

2) Definitions and Criteria

a) **Concentration** - A subcurriculum such as a new or established method of inquiry or an important field of application that may (or may not) be interdisciplinary and is applicable to an existing graduate program. It usually consists of a coordinated set of at least 4 graduate level courses (of at least 3 units each, in addition to independent research/study) delivered by the graduate program faculty in conjunction with examinations and a thesis and/or dissertation, and is joined with established graduate program curricula in a manner such that the requirements of the graduate program and the concentration are met concurrently. Concentrations have significant research and teaching components and must be approved by the Graduate Council. The availability of concentrations is noted in each program's description in the *General Catalog*. Each concentration and its requirements are described, and a summary of all concentrations are provided. It is the responsibility of the graduate group to review and update the catalog text pertaining to concentrations, so that current practice is officially recorded. Concentrations are usually reflected explicitly in the content and tenor of the thesis and/or dissertation. The graduate group is also responsible for tracking the concentration(s) of students in the program and providing that information to the Registrar upon the student's completion of all requirements for the degree. The graduate group assesses concentrations as a component of existing program review mechanisms.

[1] The Draft Form was corrected to align with the policy, by replacing "diploma" with "transcript" for concentration and designated emphasis annotation.

i) **Primary Concentration** – A primary concentration is listed on a student's transcript.
ii) **Secondary Concentration** – A secondary concentration is available only to PhD students and is not listed on a student's transcript.

b) **Designated Emphasis -** A program of study, often interdisciplinary, that focuses on a specific area of scholarship and does not reside in the student's graduate program. A designated emphasis exists as an external, free-standing graduate program, only open to PhD students already accepted into another graduate program at the University of California, Merced. It has a defined course of study (in addition to independent research/study) that is the same regardless of a student's primary program of study and provides somewhat less depth and expertise in a subject (usually three graduate level courses of at least 3 units each) than the student's primary program of study. The subject matter of the designated emphasis is integrated into the dissertation, but the coursework and other requirements are *in addition to* degree requirements for students who are not participating in a designated emphasis. Students do not apply to a designated emphasis as part of their admission to UC Merced, but may apply to one with the consent of their advisor during their course of study, usually prior to taking his/her Qualifying Examination. A designated emphasis is not required as part of any graduate degree. A designated emphasis must be approved by the Graduate Council. The designated emphasis is listed on the student's transcript. The offering of designated emphasis is noted in the *General Catalog*. The requirements are specified under the offering

program's description. Programs other than the offering program may wish to include the option of pursuing a designated emphasis in their catalog descriptions, and point students towards suggested possible emphases, according to disciplinary affinity and program history.

3) Process for Establishing a Concentration

a) Complete and submit a dated "Graduate Group Summary Form" describing the existing program. If officially establishing an existing concentration, the accompanying cover letter should reference the appropriate pages describing the requirements for the concentration(s) within the approved CCGA proposal (and date of approval).

b) A request to revise an existing, or establish a new, concentration must also include the following appendices:

(1) Request for Approval to Modify Graduate Degree Requirements Form, including a letter describing the revised or new concentration, the rationale for revision or addition, the need, and the potential resource implications. Please note that WSCUC Substantive Change review may be required if the proposed alterations would result in a "significantly different degree program."
(2) Revised and Dated Graduate Group Summary Form
(3) Revised Graduate Group Catalog Copy
(4) Revised Graduate Group Website Copy
(5) Revised/New and Complete Course Request Form Packet(s)

(6) Letter(s) of Support from the Lead Dean and affected graduate groups, if appropriate.

c) Routing Process

i) For concentration(s) as described in the original, approved CCGA proposal:

(1) Graduate Group submits the dated Graduate Group Summary Form and cover letter to the Graduate Council

(2) Graduate Council conducts a preliminary review and sends the form and cover letter to the Office of Periodic Review, Assessment, and Accreditation Support, the Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education, and the Office of the Registrar for comment.

(3) Once comments are received, the Graduate Council reviews comments and approves or rejects the Graduate Group's request to acknowledge an existing concentration. Graduate Council's decision is communicated to the Graduate Group and a copy of the decision is sent to the Office of Periodic Review, Assessment, and Accreditation Support, Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education, and the Office of the Registrar.

ii) For revised or new concentration(s):

(1) Graduate Group submits the dated Graduate Group Summary Form, cover letter, and all required appendices to the Graduate Council

(2) Graduate Council conducts a preliminary review and sends the form, cover letter, and appendices to the Office of Periodic Review, Assessment, and Accreditation Support, Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education, Office of the Registrar, and the Committee on Academic Planning and Resource Allocation for comment

(3) Once comments are received, the Graduate Council reviews comments and approves or rejects the Graduate Group's request to acknowledge a revised or new concentration. Graduate Council's decision is communicated to the Graduate Group and a copy of the decision is sent to the Office of Periodic Review, Assessment, and Accreditation Support, Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education, Office of the Registrar, and the Committee on Academic Planning and Resource Allocation

4) Process for Establishing a Designated Emphasis

a) Faculty considering creation of a new DE should agree on a definition and description of the DE and meet with the Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education and the Lead Dean to discuss the nature of the DE, the faculty affiliated with the proposal, the proposed timeline for program implementation, and the potential impact on current graduate degree programs.

Interested faculty must prepare a DE proposal for the designated emphasis following guidelines and meeting requirements below.

i) Description of the Designated Emphasis
Provide a description of the academic rationale for the Designated Emphasis, including recent developments in the field and the Designated Emphasis' importance to students and faculty at UC Merced.

ii) Requirements for the Designated Emphasis
Describe the criteria used to determine admission. Describe the curriculum, qualifying examination requirements (if any), dissertation requirements (if any), and the Designated Emphasis conferral process. Provide course descriptions for core courses and electives. Describe the Designated Emphasis' potential impact on time to degree completion.

iii) Graduate Group Administration
Provide a description of how the Designated Emphasis will be administered. List the Chair and Executive Committee of the Graduate Group. Describe the structure for student advising and the appointment of faculty to the qualifying examination and the dissertation committees.

iv) Resources
The proposal should address the resources available, such as staff support, student support, and available facilities, and the issue of resources required to administer the Designated Emphasis. If no additional resources are required, this should be stated. If additional resources are required, they should be described and the source of support should be identified.

v) Assessment plan for annual and periodic program review
The proposal should include program learning outcomes (PLOs) for the designated emphasis, together with curriculum map and a multi-year plan for assessing student achievement of the PLOs that is consistent with institutional expectations for annual assessment and periodic program review. All faculty involved in the Designated Emphasis share responsibility for completing the assessment for the Designated Emphasis. Assessment should include evidence that graduate students are achieving the program learning outcomes at a level appropriate for a PhD degree recipient.

vi) Appendices
   (a) A completed and dated "Designated Emphasis Degree Requirements" form
   (b) Bylaws of the Designated Emphasis Graduate Group (following the template for Graduate Group Bylaws)
   (c) The proposal should include letters of support from the Lead Dean and Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education regarding the resources and implications of support for the proposed Designated Emphasis.
   (d) Letter of endorsement from the Graduate Group Chair of the doctoral program with which the majority of participating faculty are affiliated and

selected letters from faculty who agree to participate in the Designated Emphasis.

(e) Roster of participating faculty (participating faculty must be Academic Senate members eligible to serve on higher degree committees).

b) Requests to revise the curriculum and/or admission requirements for an existing Designated Emphasis must be submitted to, and approved by, the Graduate Council. The following information should be included in the request:

i) A Graduate Group Summary Form, a Request for Approval to Modify Graduate Degree Requirements Form, and cover letter from the chair of the Designated Emphasis that outlines the reasons for the changes requested and includes any justification necessary. Of particular concern to the Graduate Council is the impact of the changes on the time to degree in the affiliated graduate programs.

(a) Please note that letters of support from affiliated Graduate Groups' chairs may be necessary if the proposed revisions might impact the normative time to degree.

ii) A letter of support from the Lead Dean regarding resources and implications of support for the changes requested must also accompany the cover letter.

iii) A revised and dated "Designated Emphasis Degree Requirements" form. The last approved version of the Designated Emphasis requirements approved by Graduate Council should be included as Appendix A.

c) Routing Process

i) For a new Designated Emphasis

(1) The faculty proposing the Designated Emphasis submits the proposal for "pre-review" by the Graduate Division to ensure that the proposal contains required information and to identify problems that may slow the formal proposal review process. Graduate Division provides the results of this pre-review in a memo to the proposing group.

(2) The proposing faculty submits the proposal, appendices, and response to Graduate Division pre-review to the Graduate Council. Graduate Council conducts a preliminary review. If the proposal is found satisfactory in this preliminary review, Graduate Council sends the proposal and attachments to the Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education, the Committee on Academic Planning and Resource Allocation, and Undergraduate Council for comment.

(3) Once comments are received, the Graduate Council reviews the comments and approves or rejects the Designated Emphasis proposal. Graduate Council's decision is communicated to the proposing faculty and a copy of the decision is sent to the Office of Periodic Review, Assessment, and Accreditation Support, Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education, Office of the Registrar, Divisional Council. Graduate Council will notify the Coordinating Committee on Graduate Affairs (CCGA), the relevant UC systemwide committee, of the approval of a new Designated Emphasis program.

ii) For a revised Designated Emphasis
   (1) The proposing faculty submits the dated Graduate Group Summary Form and all other required documents to the Graduate Council.
   (2) Graduate Council conducts a preliminary review and sends the form and related documents to the Office of Periodic Review, Assessment, and Accreditation Support, Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education, Office of the Registrar, and the Committee on Academic Planning and Resource Allocation for comment.
   (3) Once comments are received, the Graduate Council reviews comments and approves or rejects the proposing faculty's request to revise the Designated Emphasis. Graduate Council's decision is communicated to the proposing faculty and a copy of the decision is sent to the Office of Periodic Review, Assessment, and Accreditation Support, Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education, Office of the Registrar, and the Committee on Academic Planning and Resource Allocation.

Graduate Group Summary Form

Date: _____

Degree Program: _____
Degree Objective: _____
Degree (Diploma) Title: _____
Degree Program Code: _____

Concentration: _____
Concentration (Transcript) Annotation: _____
Concentration Code: _____

Affiliated Designated Emphasis: _____
Designated Emphasis Transcript Annotation: _____
Designated Emphasis Code: _____

Date Authorized: _____

Last Updated: _____

Last Program Review: _____

Normative Time: _____

Application Deadlines: _____

Admission Requirements: _____

Advising: _____

Residence Requirement: _____

Language/Alternate Skills Requirement: _____

Teaching Requirement: _____

DRAFT

Coursework and Examination Requirements:

Required Courses, Elective Courses: _____

Advancement to Candidacy: _____

M.S. Plan I Thesis: _____

M.S. Plan II Comprehensive Exam: _____

Dissertation: _____

Concentration Requirements: _____

DRAFT

Designated Emphasis in XX
Degree Requirements
Revised:
Approved by Graduate Council: _____

A. Admissions Criteria

Describe the criteria used to determine admission of students to the DE. For example:

Any student admitted to a participating doctoral program is eligible for admission, provided that:

a) *The candidate has begun the study of either X and X;* ***and***

b) The candidate intends to complete a dissertation in which the topic relates to, and incorporates some aspect of X or X.

B. Curriculum (include the existing requirements as Appendix A)

1. Required courses:

List required courses and the unit value of each, as well as total units required. For example:

- *GC 200A – 4 units*
- *GC 200B – 4 units*
- *One (1) additional course to be selected in consultation with the student's DE advisor. This course may be another course in X or a course in another department which emphasizes the connection of X and X with the student's field of study. – 4 units*

TOTAL REQUIRED UNITS: 12

2. Elective courses:

List allowable elective courses by name and number, and include their unit value.

3. Qualifying Examination

List any QE requirements, and the following:

The student's Qualifying Examination Committee must include at least one member of the DE. The DE member of the Qualifying Exam Committee shall be recommended by the Executive Committee of the DE. The Chair of the DE and the student's Ph.D. program Graduate Adviser must co-sign the Qualifying Examination Committee form, which is submitted to the Graduate Division for approval by the Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education.

The Qualifying Examination will assess the student's depth and breadth of knowledge within the area of the DE, as well as the Ph.D. program area. Satisfactory performance on the Qualifying Examination for the Ph.D. will be judged independently from performance on the DE. Thus, an allowable outcome of the Qualifying Examination is that the student's performance may be "passing" for the Ph.D. but "not passing" for the DE. In the event that a student passes the PhD qualifying exam, but receives a "not pass" for the DE, the Executive Committee of the DE will define a plan for remediation. The plan may include, but is not limited to re-examination by the DE Executive Committee, coursework, teaching, or preparation of a paper. If the student is re-examined, the outcome is limited to "pass" or "fail". If the student receives a "fail", the student is disqualified from the DE.

DRAFT

4. Dissertation Requirements

List any dissertation requirements, and the following:

The student's Dissertation Committee shall be selected in accordance with the regulations of the Ph.D. program, but must include at least one member of the DE. The DE member may be the Dissertation Committee Chair. The dissertation topic will be relevant to the area of the DE.

5. Degree Conferral Process:

The Designated Emphasis will be awarded solely in conjunction with the Ph.D. and will be signified by the degree designation "Ph.D. in X with Emphasis in (name of DE)" where X is the Ph.D. program.

C. Student Advising

Include a description of the method by which the DE will oversee the academic progress of students in the DE.

D. Impact on Time to Degree

Include any projected impact on the time to degree for the student's home program. If necessary, include letters from the Chairs of affiliated programs specifying the impact on time to degree, and their support for the proposed revisions.

E. Relation to Existing UCM Programs

Include information on relation with other graduate programs and projected impact of proposed changes to the graduate groups at UC

DRAFT