Graduate and Research Council (GRC)
Procedures for Submitting Proposals for Graduate Emphasis Areas and Graduate Programs

Approved by GRC on January 19, 2010
(links updated on January 6, 2020)

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

For new emphasis areas as well as new graduate programs, 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. Proposals for new graduate programs should demonstrate growth to the point of being ready to service a full-fledged graduate program, whereas proposals for new emphasis areas should have clear plans and timelines for developing into a full-fledged graduate program.

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 new emphasis areas are also converted and submitted to the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). Both of these bodies must approve new graduate programs before students may be admitted and degrees conferred. CCGA and WASC 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 WASC proposals are as follows.

1. For new emphasis areas, proposing faculty members should follow the proposal format described at the end of this document. 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.ucmerced.edu/sites/senate.ucmerced.edu/files/page/documents/ccga_handbook_august_2019_final.pdf
2. 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.

3. In the By-Laws, the structures of one or more faculty committees (internal to the graduate program) should be outlined who are responsible for curriculum and program assessment, and substantive change review.
4. Proposing faculty members should contact the WASC Academic Liaison Officer (ALO), who will identify a WASC Substantive Change Specialist to work with faculty members on translating the CCGA proposal into the corresponding WASC proposal.

5. 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.
6. Proposals should include Program Learning Outcomes, a Curricular Map, and an Assessment Plan as WASC instruments. The Program Learning Outcomes should be posted to the graduate program's website, once the graduate program or emphasis area is approved by CCGA.
7. The proposal should be voted on and approved by faculty members of the proposed graduate program. Proposing faculty members should also consult with other faculty groups who may be affected by the proposed graduate program. Consultation may consist of informal communications, for example, or proposals may include letters of support from consulted faculty groups.
8. 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 GRC (for academic review), the Committee on Academic Planning and Resource Allocation (CAPRA), the Executive Vice Chancellor (EVC, for budgetary review), and the Graduate Dean. GRC receives comments from CAPRA and the Graduate Dean, and may request revisions from proposing faculty members. GRC ultimately votes to approve or reject the CCGA proposal.
9. Approved CCGA proposals are submitted to CCGA for final UC review and approval (see the CCGA Handbook for their review procedures). At about the same time that proposals are submitted to CCGA, the corresponding WASC proposal should be submitted to WASC 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 Graduate Dean for comment and transmittal to the EVC. A copy of GRC 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 Dean of Graduate Studies, the Chair of the Divisional Senate, and the Chair of the Graduate and Research Council.
    d. The GRC Chair transmits the proposal to the Coordinating Committee on Graduate Affairs for system-wide Academic Senate approval.

e. 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 GRC Chair and Graduate Dean who notifies the graduate program, and Offices of Accounting & Financial Services, Admissions, University Communications, Registrar, and Planning and Resource Management.

Proposal Format for New Emphasis Areas

1. Name of the program, principal faculty contact person, proposed lead dean, and proposed degree(s) offered (M.S., M.A., and/or Ph.D.)

2. Brief description of the program: what it is, why it should be established at Merced at this time, and its relationship to existing and planned graduate groups, graduate emphasis areas, and/or institutes at Merced.

3. Resources: new faculty, staff, courses, and facilities (including equipment, space, library) that are needed.

4. Provide an estimate of the number of graduate students likely to be involved, both initially and at steady state.

5. Describe likely employment opportunities after degree completion.

6. Timeline: when does the new emphasis area plan to start offering courses and accepting students? On what time scale would this emphasis area expect to become a full-fledged graduate group?

7. Policies and Procedures, and By-Laws

> Note: The Graduate Advisors Handbook (GAH) details policies and procedures for graduate programs at UC Merced. Emphasis areas may impose additional or more stringent policies and procedures, but they cannot conflict with or diminish those already detailed in the GAH. For clarity, policies and procedures specific to the emphasis area should be clearly referenced to the section in the GAH to which they relate. This should be achieved by (1) using just one paragraph for each additional policy or procedure that the emphasis area may impose, (2) the first sentence in each paragraph should indicate the section in the GAH to which the additional policy or procedure relates, (3) the paragraph should not be a modified copy of sentences or a paragraph from the GAH, but should clearly state what the additional policy or procedure is.

8. Program Learning Outcomes, Curricular Map, and Assessment Plan. The Policies and Procedures Manual should reference the Program Learning Outcomes, Curricular Map articulating alignment between Program Learning Outcomes and Course Outcomes, and Assessment Plan, which are separate documents.

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