

GRADUATE COUNCIL (GC)**MEETING MINUTES****Friday, March 7, 2025****11:30am – 1:00pm****ZOOM**

Documents available in [Box](#)
[Graduate Council Duties](#)

Pursuant to call, the Graduate Council met at 11:30am on March 7, 2025. Chair John Abatzoglou presiding.

I. Consent Calendar – Chair Abatzoglou**A. Today's Agenda****Action:**

- Today's Agenda was approved as presented.

B. [February 21 Draft Meeting Minutes](#)**Action:**

- The February 21 Meeting Minutes were approved as presented.

C. SSHA Petition for Graduate Student to Teach Upper Division Course**[Espinoza Selina PSY 191 202520](#)**

A member noted that the course number was listed incorrectly on the petition.

Actions:

- The petition was conditionally approved with confirmation of the course number.
- The GC Analyst confirmed the course number with SSHA Graduate Services.
- The GC Chair signed the petition, and the GC Analyst notified VPDGE Hratchian.

D. Courses**[PHYS - 272 - Quantum Information Science](#) (New; Fall 2025)****Action:**

- GC approved PHYS – 272 and Curriculog was updated accordingly.

II. Chair's Report – John Abatzoglou**A. February 25 Divisional Council Meeting**

Divisional Council members met with Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management and Marketing (VCEM) Scott Hagg who expressed optimism regarding enrollment management strategies to obtain large increases in undergraduate enrollment.

Divisional Council members endorsed a proposal for the Christine Nemec Long Endowed Chair in Agricultural Technology.

B. February 27 Meeting with UGC Leads

Chair Abatzoglou and Vice Chair Beattie met with the UGC Vice Chair to discuss

Professional and Continuing Education (PACE), as some of the PACE programs cut across both undergraduate and graduate levels, as well as the development of a faculty workgroup with members from both GC, UGC, and CRE with the aim of providing recommendations by the end of Fall 2025.

C. March 5 CCGA Meeting

CCGA members expressed concerns regarding funding commitments to students. There were many questions raised about how to guarantee funding to support students even when the funding may potentially be rescinded. As a security measure, some UCs are changing the language in their offer letters to state that funding is guaranteed as long as it is available.

There is concern that Statement of Intent to Register (SIR) rates are going to be considerably high as some universities are not admitting new students and some are even rescinding admissions. Members discussed whether the priority should be to support the current students or to admit more students.

CCGA members discussed a decrease in Facilities and Administrative (F&A) costs. It was noted that it may decrease to 30-35%.

D. March 6 SNS and SOE Graduate Group Chairs' Meeting

The Graduate Group Chairs discussed how the various groups are using Block Grant funds. Block Grants can be used to support students through fellowships in the summer term, etc. One point of discussion was that TAs make substantially more money on a 9-month appointment than GSRs do in the current negotiation. The Graduate Group Chairs discussed whether they should be prioritizing students who have been TAs in the summer with a summer fellowship versus students who have been GSRs, as there are currently inequities between the positions. Also, it is important to use the Block Grants effectively and ensure students are making progress while receiving a summer fellowship.

III. Vice Chair's Report – Irene Beattie

A. Shared Program Review Workgroup

In Fall 2024, PROC received a memo from faculty in SNS expressing concerns with undergraduate and graduate program reviews being conducted separately from one another. Separate reviews can create more work for the faculty in duplicating efforts. It is also a disincentive to new programs, as each program is reviewed separately on a different cycle.

Members reviewed the draft charge for the Shared Program Review Workgroup. Vice Chair Beattie noted several concerns with the current draft of the charge, including that there are only two Senate Faculty representatives. She added that it would be valuable to have faculty representation from either interdisciplinary programs or from some of the groups that initially raised the concerns. Members agreed that there needs to be more Senate Faculty representation in the composition of the workgroup.

Vice Chair Beattie noted that it may be worth considering not only graduate and undergraduate reviews, but also departmental reviews. A departmental review may offer a more holistic approach, yet different programs may have different aims. Because of this, Vice Chair Beattie suggested making it more explicit in the charge to consider both departmental and program reviews.

A member informed the committee that their program recently underwent a program review, and the

individuals that conducted the review noted that their campus uses Canvas to collect information on items such as PLOs and CLOs. The member suggested that automating part of the review process could improve efficiency. Vice Chair Beattie agreed, noting that this could potentially be integrated into the review process, as one of the key objectives included in the draft charge is to “Propose changes to program review policies and develop new templates and resources as needed.”

Vice Chair Beattie noted that the timeline for the draft charge could be improved by being more specific and emphasized that the charge should include accreditation compliance as part of the process.

IV. [GC's Policy on Graduate Students Teaching Graduate Students](#) – Chair Abatzoglou

At their February 11, 2025 meeting, Divisional Council (DivCo) members reviewed the revised GC policy for Graduate Students Teaching Graduate Students. DivCo expressed support for the policy but offered a suggestion for refinement regarding the approval process of Instructors of Record (IOR), section I. item 6 of the policy. Specifically, it was proposed that GC be removed as an approver of these requests.

The proposed revisions can be found in tracked changes on page 2 of DivCo’s memo available [here](#). A clean version of the policy is available [here](#).

Members reviewed DivCo’s recommended revision to the policy. Chair Abatzoglou shared background information as to why section I. item 6 of the policy was originally included. Members agreed with DivCo’s recommendation, as they believed it reduces confusion and redundancies with other policies.

Actions:

- Voting members unanimously approved DivCo’s recommended revision to the policy.
- The GC Analyst drafted a memo to DivCo containing GC’s approval of the revised policy.

V. **Discussion: Artificial Intelligence (AI)** – Chair Abatzoglou

At the February 21, 2025 GC meeting, members discussed Artificial Intelligence (AI) in relation to graduate education and academic integrity. Currently, the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities (OSRR) oversees academic honesty and misconduct through the [Academic Honesty Policy](#) and the [Code of Student Conduct](#).

Existing UC Merced Policies and Guidance:

- OSRR: [UCM Academic Integrity](#)
“Plagiarism refers to the use of another’s ideas or words without proper attribution, or credit.”
- Research Compliance and Integrity: [Research Misconduct](#)
- Graduate Policies and Procedures Handbook (GPPH): [Academic Disqualification](#) (page 40)
- [Using AI in Instruction](#)

Related Articles Regarding the Use of AI:

- [Protecting Human Cognition in the Age of AI](#)
- [AI Tools in Society: Impacts on Cognitive Offloading and the Future of Critical Thinking](#)

GC Brainstorm Google Doc on AI Policies for Graduate Education is available [here](#).

Chair Abatzoglou informed members that he had brought this topic up at the last CCGA meeting. Some campuses are beginning to explore various approaches to address AI use. One campus is encouraging

each graduate group to develop its own policy regarding AI, as different disciplines have different practices. Another recommendation was to have advisors and committee members agree on the allowable AI terms for each graduate student's qualifying exam and/or defense.

Members discussed AI and had varying opinions on its use. Some members thought that AI use was concerning. Furthermore, tailoring AI to each graduate student would be inefficient and could create inequities between students. Additionally, since faculty have such differing opinions regarding AI, it can be a dangerous space for students if there are no clear guidelines or policies to regulate the use of AI. Other members noted that they were very open to the use of AI, recognizing its widespread presence and potential as a valuable tool, especially in the sciences and engineering where data is an important factor for students to convey as long as the data comes from the student. AI can also be a valuable tool for non-native speaking students.

Members discussed how AI use varies across disciplines. Some disciplines encourage AI use, provided it is used properly, while others encourage students to use critical thinking and to find answers without the use of AI. Because of this, many members agreed that it might be best to leave the decision on AI use up to the graduate groups. For example, the [UC Riverside guidance](#) includes an overarching general ethical statement that notes the use of AI can cross the lines of academic misconduct and also refers students to their graduate group for further guidance. Additional ideas from members included the creation of a blanket policy that states that AI use is not permitted unless explicitly allowed by an instructor; to provide guidance, resources, and instructions on how to use AI properly and ethically; and to grant faculty access to AI checkers.

Members expressed the importance of not only considering the policies that are developed, but also who is enforcing those policies, as academic integrity is currently overseen by OSRR. Additionally, the enforcement of any policy would be very difficult, as there are various types and uses of AI. Despite this, members agreed that it would be important for the committee to reflect on the quality and purpose of graduate education and how AI can intersect with that, and how AI can at other times undermine it.

Actions:

- Chair Abatzoglou will synthesize the committee's comments and share them with GC members.
- This topic will be added to a future GC agenda for further discussion.

VI. Waiver Policy for In-Person Graduate Defenses – Chair Abatzoglou

Faculty with ADA-based accommodations to work remotely have concerns about the policy requirement in the [Graduate Policies & Procedures Handbook](#) (page 39) mandating in-person attendance at graduate defenses. Some faculty members make every effort to attend defenses in person, but often times they are unable to do so and are then required to fill out last-minute waivers so that they can attend the defenses remotely.

Relevant language from UC Merced and other UC campuses is available [here](#).

Members discussed possible resolutions. One recommendation was to add explicit language to the current policy, clarifying that individuals with an ADA-based accommodation are exempt from the in-person requirement. Another consideration was whether the committee should change the language regarding the in-person requirement for defenses altogether.

Members discussed why UC Merced's policy was more restrictive than other campus' policies. If UC Merced were to make its policy more flexible, situations where virtual options were acceptable would

need to be clearly outlined. Members then discussed the importance of attending qualifying exams and defenses in person versus the flexibility of attending virtually. Members believed that presenting in person was very important for the experience of students engaging with their audience, as well as the academic rigor associated with it. Regardless of this, members agreed that exceptions and a virtual option should be allowed.

After further discussion, a member noted that there are two separate issues. The first is whether the policy is necessary, and the second is who should administer the policy. Members believed that perhaps the School Dean, Department Chair, and/or Graduate Group Chair should administer the policy, as they administer the faculty's employment and would already have access to the knowledge of any ADA-based accommodations.

Members agreed with the language used in the [UC San Diego policy](#). They also agreed with a default policy where exams and defenses are administered in person, however, if necessary, exception requests are sent to the Graduate Group Chair or Department Chair.

Actions:

- Chair Abatzoglou will synthesize the committee's comments and provide options of resolution for the committee to review at a future meeting.
- This topic will be added to a future GC agenda.

VII. Campus and Systemwide Review Items – Chair Abatzoglou

A. [Business Administration B.A. and Minor Proposal](#) (Campus wide)

The proposal is from SSHA with implementation planned for Fall 2026 for first-year and continuing students, and Fall 2027 for transfer students.

Comments are due to the Senate Chair by **Monday, April 7, 2025**.

Actions:

- GC members declined to opine.
- The GC Analyst notified the Senate Chair that GC declined to opine.

B. [Accounting B.S. and Minor Proposal](#) (Campus wide)

The proposal is from SSHA with implementation planned for Fall 2026 for first-year and continuing students, and Fall 2028 for transfer students.

Comments are due to the Senate Chair by **Monday, April 7, 2025**.

Actions:

- GC members declined to opine.
- The GC Analyst notified the Senate Chair that GC declined to opine.

C. [Presidential Policy BFB-BUS-63: Risk Transfer and Insurance Requirements](#) (Systemwide)

Summary of proposed revisions:

- Clarify that the scope of the policy covers both indemnification and insurance requirements in contracts between the University and contractors or external users;
- Modify the responsible parties at each location to allow for local designations;
- Clarify the exception process; and

- Expand the FAQ section to provide additional details and clarification.

Comments are due to the Senate Chair by **Friday, April 11, 2025**.

Actions:

- GC members declined to opine.
- The GC Analyst notified the Senate Chair that GC declined to opine.

D. [Systemwide Academic Calendar Workgroup Draft Report](#) (Systemwide)

In September 2024, UC Provost Katherine Newman and systemwide Academic Senate Chair Steven Cheung established a collaborative Academic Planning Council (APC) workgroup, bringing together faculty and administrators. Tasked with evaluating the existing academic calendars, the workgroup aimed to identify enhancements that will better support the University of California’s mission in teaching, research, and public service. This comprehensive review focuses specifically on the academic calendars of UC’s nine undergraduate campuses, excluding UC San Francisco and graduate professional programs.

Comments are due to the Senate Chair by **Monday, April 14, 2025**.

Members noted that this would likely not affect UC Merced, as the campus is already on a semester system.

Chair Abatzoglou informed members that at CCGA, it was noted that on a semester system there is the potential to run intensive half-semester courses.

Actions:

- GC members declined to opine.
- The GC Analyst notified the Senate Chair that GC declined to opine.

VIII. VPDGE Hratchian’s Report

VPDGE Hratchian was unable to attend today’s meeting.

Action:

- VPDGE Hratchian will send GC members a written report containing his updates.

IX. Any Other Business

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:00pm.

Attest: John Abatzoglou, GC Chair