

**GRADUATE COUNCIL (GC)****MEETING MINUTES****Friday, April 4, 2025****11:30am – 1:00pm****ZOOM**

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

Pursuant to call, the Graduate Council met at 11:30am on April 4, 2025. Chair John Abatzoglou presiding.

**I. Executive Session – Voting Members Only**

No minutes were recorded during the Executive Session. The action items were shared with GC voting members.

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

- Today's Agenda was approved as presented.

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

- The March 21 Meeting Minutes were approved as presented.

**C. Courses**

[ECON - 297 - Research Practicum](#) (New; Spring 2026)

**Action:**

- ECON - 297 – Research Practicum was approved as presented and Curriculog was updated accordingly.

**III. Chair's Report – John Abatzoglou****A. April 1 Divisional Council Meeting**

Divisional Council endorsed the proposed revisions to GC's Policy for Establishing Hybrid Undergraduate/Graduate Hybrid Degree Programs.

CoR Chair Tao Ye provided an update on the March 11-12, 2025 UC Academic Congress on Research where there were discussions of possible scenarios regarding the future of federal funding.

Divisional Council members held a consultation with Campus Legal Counsel Alvarado-Gil regarding his team's work in response to the recent federal government actions and

executive orders. Counsel Alvarado-Gil's office is working with colleagues in the Association of American Universities (AAU) and other institutions across the country, conducting internal assessments on various issues, and providing advice to former students with visa issues.

B. April 3 SNS & SOE Graduate Group Chairs' Meeting

Graduate Group Chairs continued to discuss and identify potential uses for Block Grant funding, focusing on how it can be utilized given the uncertainties regarding student support for the upcoming academic year.

**IV. 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](#).

At the March 7, 2025 GC meeting, members discussed their various opinions on the use of AI, as well as recommendations for potential action. Following the discussion, Chair Abatzoglou agreed to synthesize the committee's comments for further discussion at a future meeting.

At the March 21, 2025 GC meeting, members agreed to survey the Graduate Group Chairs for their feedback regarding the use of AI. The Google Doc with potential survey questions is available [here](#).

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](#)

Members reviewed the list of potential survey questions on the Google Doc and suggested minor edits.

The Graduate Student Representative reported on the Graduate Student Association's (GSA) perspective on AI use. GSA members believe that it might be useful to also send the survey to graduate students, as there may be a mismatch between what faculty perceive students using AI for and what students are actually using AI for. GC members agreed; however, they noted that a different survey would need to be sent to graduate students as the questions would be different than the ones for Graduate Group Chairs. Additionally, given the limited time remaining in the semester, it may be more realistic to send the survey to the Graduate Group Chairs in the Spring and another survey to graduate students in Fall 2025.

Members agreed that it would be best to distribute the survey to Graduate Group Chairs soon in an effort to receive their feedback prior to the end of the semester.

**Actions:**

- Chair Abatzoglou invited members to continue revising the [proposed survey questions](#) through **5:00pm, Thursday, April 10, 2025.**
- Following the deadline, Chair Abatzoglou and Vice Chair Beattie will finalize the survey questions and create a Qualtrics survey.
- The Qualtrics survey will be distributed to the Graduate Group Chairs prior to the April 18, 2025 GC meeting.

**V. 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.

At the March 7, 2025 GC meeting, members discussed possible resolutions. Chair Abatzoglou agreed to synthesize the committee's comments and provide options of resolution for the committee to review at a future meeting.

At the March 21, 2025 GC meeting, members agreed to revise the relevant language in the Graduate Policies & Procedures Handbook.

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

VPDGE Hratchian informed members that Assistant Vice Provost Cisneros and Director of Admissions & Academic Services Zarate plan to meet with the Human Resources Accommodations Office in order to discuss the specific policies and procedures regarding faculty with approved accommodations. He added that if any of the outcomes from the meeting contradict GC's decision on this matter, he will let the committee know.

Members reviewed the [proposed amendments](#) to Section V.F.1 Scheduling of Examinations in the Graduate Policies and Procedures Handbook (GPPH) and proposed further revisions. Members discussed the inclusion of qualifying exams, as these exams vary between graduate groups. Ultimately, members decided to focus the language on 'defenses', since not all departments have a qualifying exam, and those that do have varying procedures. Members also discussed whether to set a specified number of days for the Committee Chair to request a remote defense but chose not to include a specific number, leaving the decision to the graduate group.

Members discussed whether allowing remote defenses without prior approval would lead to too many remote defenses. It was suggested that the Graduate Division should record the frequency of in-residence remote participation post-defense to monitor if the frequency of remote defense participation rises to a concerning level.

Members discussed who should have the authority to approve remote defense requests. Possible options were the Committee Chair, Graduate Group Chair, or Department Chair. VPDGE Hratchian suggested that the policy not specify a particular approver, leaving the decision to each graduate group. Members agreed and instead decided to note that the modality would be recorded by the Graduate Division post-defense.

**Actions:**

- Members unanimously voted to approve the proposed amendments to Section V.F.1 Scheduling of Examinations in the GPPH with the additional edits.
- The GC Analyst will draft a memo to VPDGE Hratchian and Assistant Vice Provost Cisneros regarding the proposed amendments.

**VI. Systemwide Review Items – Chair Abatzoglou****A. [Proposed Revisions to APM 500, Recruitment – Updated](#)**

The policy revisions respond to the need to address two new bills signed into state law that add and amend sections 92612.1 and 92612.2 of the California Education Code, effective January 1, 2025 (reference Senate Bill (SB) 791, Postsecondary education: academic and administrative employees: disclosure of sexual harassment, and California Assembly Bill (AB) 810, Postsecondary education: hiring practices: academic, athletic, and administrative positions). The new revisions are indicated below using **bold** and underlined text.

At the March 21, 2025 GC meeting, Chair Abatzoglou agreed to serve as lead reviewer. His comments are available [here](#).

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

Chair Abatzoglou summarized his comments to the committee, noting that the proposed revisions would affect not only graduate student employees, but also Postdoctoral Scholars, who fall under GC's purview. Members believed that admissions into graduate programs should be decoupled from employment offers but acknowledged that nearly all PhD degree programs and some M.S. programs currently bundle admissions with employment offers. Furthermore, funding commitments tied to admissions often result in highly competitive offers during the admissions process. Members agreed that the current language in the offer letters distributed by the Graduate Division is sufficient in addressing these concerns.

**Actions:**

- Members voted and unanimously approved the [draft memo](#).
- The GC Analyst finalized the memo and transmitted it to the Senate Chair.

**B. [Proposed Revisions to APM 360 – Appointment and Promotion, Librarian Series](#)**

The proposed revisions are intended to update the definition of the Librarian Series.

Comments are due to the Senate Chair by **Friday, April 25, 2025**.

**Actions:**

- Chair Abatzoglou invited members to review the proposed revisions and share any comments with Petra and Chair Abatzoglou by **10:00am, Thursday, April 10, 2025**.
- In the absence of comments by the deadline, the GC Analyst will notify the Senate Chair that GC declines to opine.

**C. VPDGE Hratchian's Report**

- a. Graduate Division Task Forces on Graduate Application Review and International Student Orientation

The Graduate Division created the Graduate Application Task Force to review the graduate

application, as a review has not been conducted in the three years since VPDGE Hratchian assumed his position. VPDGE Hratchian consulted with Chair Abatzoglou who noted that it did not seem necessary to include a GC member as part of the task force, as there appeared to be sufficient faculty representation. Alternatively, the task force plans to provide GC with its recommendations.

The GSA suggested creating a similar program to Graduate Orientation Week (GROW) for international students. In response, the Graduate Division created the International Student Task Force to begin working on this initiative.

**Actions:**

- The GC Analyst circulated both task force charges to all GC members.
- VPDGE Hratchian invited members to share any suggestions regarding the graduate application with Associate Dean of Graduate Education Ghosh ([sghosh@ucmerced.edu](mailto:sghosh@ucmerced.edu)).

b. Updates on Admissions and Federal Government

Doctoral admissions are currently up 48% campus-wide compared to April 4, 2024. VPDGE Hratchian noted that the large increase may be due to admissions letters being sent out earlier this year and predicted that admissions would begin to slow soon. Across campuses, there have been concerns about the high number of Statements of Intent to Register (SIRs) and the uncertainty surrounding Federal funding resources.

The UC Graduate Deans have been discussing potential challenges for incoming students obtaining F-1 Visas this summer and the possible increase in requests for deferrals. VPDGE Hratchian has requested that Graduate Group Chairs, Department Chairs, and Dean's Offices begin developing contingency plans in case a high number of international students do not arrive in the Fall. The Graduate Division has also strongly advised that UC Merced international students do not leave the United States. The Office of International Affairs has also communicated this message to all individuals with visas they sponsor. In addition, VPDGE Hratchian noted that summer fellowships can only be awarded to individuals who will be in residence in the United States for the entirety of the summer.

VPDGE Hratchian informed members that three international UC Merced students on F-1 Visas have had their visas revoked. He recommended that the campus community support students in these situations to the best of their ability and prepare for similar occurrences in the future. VPDGE Hratchian added that he is meeting with Chief of Police Her to discuss the process and establish a clear line of communication in the event that this occurs on campus.

**D. Any Other Business**

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

Attest: John Abatzoglou, GC Chair