

GRADUATE COUNCIL (GC)**MEETING MINUTES****Friday, January 24, 2025****11:30am – 1:00pm****ZOOM**

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

Pursuant to call, the Graduate Council met at 11:30am on January 24, 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. [November 26 Draft Meeting Minutes](#)**Action:**

- The November 26 Meeting Minutes were approved as presented.

C. [GC's Draft Memo Re: Presidential Policy on the Use of Animals in Research, Teaching, and Testing](#)**Actions:**

- The draft memo was approved as presented.
- The GC Analyst transmitted the finalized memo to the Senate Chair.

D. [GC's Draft Memo Re: Non-Degree Certificate Proposals](#)**Actions:**

- The draft memo was approved as presented.
- The GC Analyst transmitted the finalized memo to the Senate Chair.

E. Proposed Graduate Group Revisions to University Catalog AY 2025-2026 Content [Bioengineering](#)**Actions:**

- Lead Reviewer: Member Wan Du
- GC approved the lead reviewer's comments.
- The GC Analyst notified the Graduate Division and Registrar accordingly.

Quantitative Systems Biology**Actions:**

- Lead Reviewer: Member Rebeca Arevalo
- GC approved the lead reviewer's comments.
- The GC Analyst notified the Graduate Division and Registrar accordingly.

Applied Mathematics**Actions:**

- Lead Reviewer: Member Susan Ge
- GC approved the Applied Math Catalog AY 2025-2026 Content revisions.
- The GC Analyst notified the Graduate Division and Registrar accordingly.

F. Courses

PHYS - 274 - Advanced Quantum Computing (Modify Existing, Fall 2025)**Action:**

- PHYS – 274 was approved as presented and Curriculog was updated accordingly.

III. Chair's Report – John Abatzoglou

A. December 2 and 16 Divisional Council Meetings

Divisional Council members discussed the SSHA Reorganization Proposal and comments from the various Senate committees. Divisional Council members then voted to endorse the SSHA restructuring plan and proposed Bylaws.

A discussion was held with EVC/Provost Dumont regarding the 5% budget cut exercise. Divisional Council members requested that the campus budget cut exercise consider the impact on undergraduate and graduate education.

Divisional Council members inquired about the campus' plans to respond to the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) report on UC Merced. Chancellor Muñoz and his staff plan to respond.

Chancellor Muñoz informed Divisional Council members that he plans to preserve human capital through the 5% budget reduction exercise.

Divisional Council members raised concerns regarding the transition to a new UC President, as President Drake has always been an ally to UC Merced.

B. December 4 and January 8 CCGA Meetings

CCGA members volunteered to serve as lead reviewers for several new graduate program proposals. A couple of new proposals are forthcoming for campus review at UC Merced.

A forthcoming report on graduate education will be available soon, and Chair Abatzoglou would like GC to review it in terms of what can be implemented at UC Merced to improve

or enhance graduate education on campus.

IV. Vice Chair's Report – Irene Beattie

A. December 9 PROC Meeting

The lead reviewers for the Sociology Program review requested an extension due to the length of the self-study. Vice Chair Beattie informed GC members that this is an important program review, as it is the first program in which both the undergraduate and graduate programs will be reviewed concurrently.

In Spring 2024, PROC piloted the use of standardized data packets for programs under review. This way the same kinds of data will be considered while reviewing all programs across campus. This approach would allow data to be used more effectively and efficiently. Vice Chair Beattie suggested that this may be a topic of interest for GC to consider in the future, as it may be beneficial to provide input on what data points should be measured in the review of graduate programs.

PROC is continuing its discussions on administrative reviews. Member Howell, who attended a meeting on this topic in the Fall, has agreed to serve as the GC representative on a subcommittee that will continue working on the administrative review process. A member raised a question about how different administrative units would be evaluated, given their varying functions. Vice Chair Beattie noted that PROC is currently focusing on identifying common functions that would span across multiple administrative units and processes.

PROC discussed concerns from the Biology faculty regarding joint reviews of undergraduate and graduate programs. Vice Chair Beattie volunteered to serve as the GC representative on a subcommittee that will continue to work on this matter.

V. Curriculum Advisory Board (CAB)/Extension Program – Vice Chair Beattie

In Fall 2024, Dean of University Extension Annette Roberts Webb requested guidance from GC on how to improve CAB, especially in terms of the charge and turnover. CAB members Mayya Tokman and Zenaida Aguirre-Munoz joined the October 29, 2024 GC meeting to discuss their experience serving on CAB. On January 16, 2025, Vice Chair Beattie met with Senate Executive Director Paul and the GC Analysts to discuss the next steps and agreed to work together to draft a charge.

Supporting Documentation:

- Senate Regulations regarding University Extension Credit Courses are available [here](#).
- UC Berkeley's Regulation of the Academic Senate related to instructors of University Extension Courses is available [here](#).
- Additional information regarding CAB and the Teacher Practitioner Advisory Board (TPAB) is available [here](#).

Vice Chair Beattie provided an update on additional information that has been gathered regarding Senate Regulations for University Extension courses. UC Merced's current procedures are not in line with the Standing Orders of the Regents in terms of Senate faculty oversight in reviewing courses, instructors, and educational effectiveness. Currently, the Senate faculty only have oversight in the approval of CRFs. The Teacher Practitioner Advisory Board (TPAB) currently has oversight on educational effectiveness and Extension leadership over the approval of instructors. Vice Chair Beattie emphasized that there are no plans to remove the TPAB, as it plays a valuable role. However, she noted that additional information needs to be gathered to ensure that oversight is properly delegated to the appropriate bodies. She added

that there are also not any term limits for CAB members at this time, so it would be important to include term limits when working on a charge, procedures, etc.

VPDGE Hratchian recommended that GC form a work group to collaborate directly with the Dean of Extension and colleagues on other campuses. He added that years ago, GC had approved the process, structure, and procedures for CAB and that the purpose of the CAB was to serve as the equivalent to a curriculum committee at the college or school level. He recommended including the Dean of Extension in future conversations, to which Vice Chair Beattie confirmed that the Dean of Extension had attended past GC meetings and is involved in discussions regarding this topic. Past discussions have included defining term limits and the possibility of bringing in an outside source with educational expertise. In addition to this, Vice Chair Beattie stated that it is important to ensure that UC Merced is following the Standing Orders of the Regents while envisioning a charge for the CAB.

VPDGE Hratchian suggested that GC set up an ad-hoc committee, or perhaps use the GC Policy Subcommittee, to explore and work in detail on potential modifications to the current CAB structure. He also recommended that the GC Policy Subcommittee develop a plan and timeline for the proposed changes, ensuring proper consultation along the way. Vice Chair Beattie confirmed that this approach is already underway, with her taking the lead on gathering information as a member of GC's Policy Subcommittee. She clarified that all conversations with various constituents have involved the entire body of GC. Once all the necessary information is gathered, and potential solutions are developed, further consultation will occur with University Extension before anything is finalized. There is nothing to report back to University Extension at this time because information is still being gathered, and it is too early in the process to engage them again.

VI. Proposed Change to Graduate Admissions Requirements: Acceptance of the Duolingo English Test (DET) – Chair Abatzoglou

The Graduate Division proposes formally accepting the Duolingo English Test (DET) in fulfillment of the Examination of English for Non-Native Speakers requirement. If approved, the DET may substitute for either of the existing required exams as part of the graduate application for admission: the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

VPDGE Hratchian informed members that UC Merced has already been accepting the DET, initially through temporary approval from GC due to the constraints of Covid. The goal is to permanently adopt the DET as an accepted exam option to fulfill the Examination of English for Non-Native Speakers requirement. Because of the cost and accessibility, this exam option is very appealing. He added that the Graduate Division conducts Zoom interviews with potential students before final admittance, and the Graduate Division is consistently reviewing how the language requirements and other processes are working. Because of this, if any issues or concerns arise, the Graduate Division is prepared to revise the graduate admissions requirements accordingly.

Members discussed the decision to make the required score for the DET test at 120, noting that several other institutions have a lower score requirement. VPDGE Hratchian agreed that UC Merced's threshold might be higher compared to others and agreed that the score requirement will be revisited after the first year or two, once enough data has been collected.

Members discussed how the DET is different qualitatively from other accepted language proficiency exams. VPDGE Hratchian stated that assessment skills need more or less data based on the way that the back-end assessment is conducted. He added that that correspondence is strong enough that the Graduate Division felt comfortable with a conservative score threshold.

Actions:

- Voting members unanimously approved the proposed change to graduate admission requirements to accept the Duolingo English Test (DET).
- The GC Analyst transmitted a response memo to Assistant Graduate Dean Cisneros containing the committee’s endorsement and comments.

VII. Campus and Systemwide Review Items – Chair Abatzoglou**A. [Presidential Policy on Dual Use Research of Concern and Pathogens with Enhanced Pandemic Potential](#) (Systemwide)**

This policy revises the current [UC Dual Use Research of Concern Policy](#) with new and updated provisions, per the White House [communication](#) on dual use research issued May 6, 2024. Specifically, the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) issued the [United States Government Policy for Oversight of Dual Use Research of Concern \(DURC\) and Pathogens with Enhanced Pandemic Potential \(PEPP\) \(USG Policy\)](#).

Comments are due to the Senate Chair by **Monday, February 3, 2025**.

Actions:

- Chair Abatzoglou invited members to review the Policy and share any comments with Petra and Chair Abatzoglou by 10:00am, Tuesday, January 28.
- In the absence of comments by the deadline, the GC Analyst notified the Senate Chair that GC declines to opine.

B. [Proposed Revisions to APM 675 – Veterinary Medicine Salary Administration](#) (Systemwide)

Summary of proposed revisions:

- Clarification that faculty members paid on the Veterinary Medicine Salary Scale are not permitted to participate in the Health Sciences Compensation Plan ([APM - 670](#)).
- Clarification that participation by faculty members paid on the Veterinary Medicine Salary Scale in the Negotiated Salary Program ([APM - 672](#)) or any future compensation or salary plan is predicated on the requirement that faculty first fully meet the minimum contribution requirements specified in APM - 675-8.d, 675 - 8.e, and 675 - 8.

Comments are due to the Senate Chair by **Friday, February 14, 2025**.

Actions:

- Chair Abatzoglou invited members to review the proposed revisions and share any comments with Petra and Chair Abatzoglou by 10:00am, Tuesday, January 28.
- In the absence of comments by the deadline, the GC Analyst notified the Senate Chair that GC declines to opine.

C. [Proposed Revisions to APM 036 – Employment](#) (Systemwide)

The policy revisions respond to the need to address a new bill signed into California state law that adds section 66284 to the California Education Code, effective January 1, 2025 (reference [AB 1905](#) “Public postsecondary education: employment: settlements, informal resolutions, and retreat rights”), and requires the University to adopt a written policy regarding official letters of recommendation, among other requirements, as a condition of receiving state funding. The proposed technical revisions are intended to bring the University into compliance with section 66284 of the California Education Code.

Comments are due to the Senate Chair by **Friday, February 28, 2025.**

Actions:

- Chair Abatzoglou invited members to review the proposed revisions and share any comments with Petra and Chair Abatzoglou by 10:00am, Tuesday, January 28.
- In the absence of comments by the deadline, the GC Analyst notified the Senate Chair that GC declines to opine.

D. [Interim Policy on Consensual Relationships](#) (Campus Wide)

The policy is intended to clarify expectations and support faculty and staff in avoiding professional conflicts of interest related to consensual relationships.

Comments are due to the Senate Chair by **Monday, March 3, 2025.**

Actions:

- Chair Abatzoglou invited members to review the Interim Policy and share any comments with Petra and Chair Abatzoglou by 10:00am, Tuesday, January 28.
- In the absence of comments by the deadline, the GC Analyst notified the Senate Chair that GC declines to opine.

E. [Proposal for a new Non-Degree Program from the UCM Division of Professional and Continuing Education \(PACE\): PK-3 Early Childhood Education \(ECE\) Specialist Instruction Credential](#) (Campus Wide)

The proposal has been reviewed and endorsed by PACE. The WSCUC Substantive Change Specialist has been consulted, and all WSCUC requirements have been met.

The guiding policy governing the establishment of a non-degree program is available [here](#).

Additional resources to help guide the Senate’s review may be found at the links below:

- [Preparing the UCM Extension Non-Degree Proposal](#)
- [Professional and Continuing Education \(PACE\) Handbook](#) (beginning on page 3)

The Division of Professional and Continuing Education hopes to implement this proposal in Fall 2025.

GC is a lead reviewer.

Comments are due to the Senate Chair by **Friday, February 21, 2025.**

Actions:

- Vice Chair Beattie agreed to serve as lead reviewer.
- The lead reviewer will send their comments to the GC Analyst by Friday, January 31, 2025.
- GC voting members will be invited to review the lead reviewer’s draft memo at a future GC meeting.

F. [Proposal for a Dual Degree Program Leading to a Bachelor of Science \(B.S.\) Degree from UCM and Doctor of Medicine Degree from UCSF](#) (Campus Wide)

The proposal packet includes:

- The dual degree proposal itself, which follows Appendix W (pp.83-84) of the September 2023 revision of the [Coordinating Committee on Graduate Affairs Handbook](#).
- A letter from the Executive Committee of each of UC Merced’s three schools. I thank them for their reviews, which have strengthened the proposal.
- The BS/MD Dual Degree Supplement. This document responds to questions and need for additional context raised by the Executive Committees that could not easily be accommodated in the proposal itself because the desired information does not align with the questions in Appendix W.
- Letters from the Interim Dean of the School of Natural Sciences, the University Librarian, and Chief Information Officer.
- The UCM-UCSF MOU.

The following documents are available to help guide the review:

- [Academic Degree Programs: UGC's Review/Approval Policy](#)
- [Procedures for Submitting Proposals for Graduate Emphasis Areas and Graduate Programs](#)
- [CCGA Handbook](#) (Appendix W, page 83) and the [Compendium](#) (Section II.B1. Establishment of New Graduate Degree Programs, and Appendix A of this document)
- [Policy and Procedures for Establishing Hybrid Undergraduate/Graduate Degree Programs \(Jan. 2024\)](#)

GC is a lead reviewer.

Comments are due to the Senate Chair by **Friday, March 7, 2025.**

Actions:

- Member Frank agreed to serve as lead reviewer.
- The lead reviewer will send their comments to the GC Analyst by **Monday, February 10, 2025.**
- GC voting members will be invited to review the lead reviewer’s draft memo at a future GC meeting.

VIII. VPDGE Hratchian’s Report

VPDGE Hratchian informed members that there is a new Graduate Division liaison in Institutional Research & Decision Support (IRDS). This collaboration is focused on developing innovative dashboards to provide insightful data on student outcomes and success. Data can be reviewed by cohort year and by year of completion. This type of data will allow Graduate Group Chairs and faculty to accurately assess their programs in real time. VPDGE Hratchian then shared with members the dashboard and the layout of the data by cohort year and by candidacy. He added that he hopes this type of data can be included in the data packets for PROC’s graduate program reviews as Vice Chair Beattie mentioned in her PROC update from today’s meeting (item IV.).

A. Graduate Visitation Day

Graduate Visitation Day will be held on Friday, February 28, 2025.

B. Graduate Admissions

Until two weeks ago, application numbers were below what was projected. Now, application numbers are slightly above for PhD applications and still slightly below for Master’s applications. Overall, the campus has seen an approximate 20% increase compared to last year. Additionally, there appeared to be a decrease in international applications and an increase in domestic applications.

C. Recruitment Fellowships

As part of the campus wide exercise to reduce budgets by 5%, the Graduate Division has considered reducing recruitment fellowships but not continuing fellowships, to ensure that current students are not negatively impacted. Staff salaries would also remain unaffected. Additionally, after conducting focus groups, it appears that full fellowships may not be as beneficial to student success outcomes as partial fellowships.

The Graduate Division will face a loss of a third of a million dollars annually for the next three fiscal years as Academic Affairs redirects funding that was previously allocated to the Graduate Division from the Temporary Academic Staffing (TAS) budget.

VPDGE Hratchian has decided to discontinue the Eugene Cota-Robles Fellowship, as it is a fellowship structured by the Office of the President, and every campus receives funding for it except UC Merced. VPDGE Hratchian has requested that the Office of the President provide funding in order to keep the fellowship at UC Merced and will not discontinue it if funding is provided.

D. Funding Gaps for External Fellowship Programs

The systemwide Vice Chancellors for Research and Graduate Deans met with UCOP’s Government Relations to resolve funding gaps for external fellowship programs, particularly with agencies such as NIH and NSF. The gap between what these grants cover and what needs to be paid is estimated to be between \$11,000 and \$15,000 per student each year. Notably, NIH does not allow other sources of grant funding to cover these gaps, which may end up burdening the faculty. The Vice Chancellors for Research and the Graduate Deans do not want this to disincentivize faculty from applying for federal funds.

VPDGE Hratchian provided two additional updates not originally included on the agenda. The first was that the Graduate Division started a program called Degrees of Determination, which highlights student stories and positive events occurring across campus. The second update focused on the Graduate Division’s work on Artificial Intelligence (AI). A series of interviews titled “[How I AI: Innovation meets Education](#)” are being conducted across campus with various faculty members to gather insights on their experience with AI.

IX. Any Other Business

No other business was discussed.

X. Informational Item

A. [GC Memo Re: Implementation of Public Law 117-328](#)

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

Attest: John Abatzoglou, GC Chair