

# Graduate Policies & Procedures Handbook

Academic Year 2023-2024



**GRADUATE  
DIVISION**

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## **I. ADMINISTRATION**

### ***A. The Role of the Graduate Division***

The Graduate Division encompasses all post-baccalaureate advanced degree programs at the University of California, Merced (UC Merced) and all graduate students. The Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education (Graduate Dean) is responsible for the administration of graduate study at UC Merced in accordance with academic policies established by the Academic Senate via the Graduate Council, and is the Academic Dean of all graduate students at UC Merced.

The Graduate Division serves as the campus-wide advocate for the advancement of graduate education and strives for standards of excellence, fairness, and equity in all graduate programs at UC Merced. The Graduate Division administers every stage of graduate student life on the Merced campus including recruitment of an excellent and diverse student body, admissions, fellowships, teaching and research assistantships and other graduate student support, mentoring activities and professional development, and tracking academic progress and degree milestones.

To fulfill this mission, the Graduate Division:

- Facilitates programmatic activities that help develop and promote academic quality through strategic planning, policy development, and effective resource allocation.
- Articulates the views, needs, and priorities of graduate education within the context of general policy and budget development to ensure that academic goals properly inform campus-wide decision-making.
- Appoints Graduate Group Chairs and works with them to ensure the quality of graduate education and student success.
- Facilitates communication among schools and administrative offices to ensure that the academic policies established by the Academic Senate's Graduate Council are implemented through efficient and rational administrative procedures.
- Protects the general welfare of graduate students in all areas of concern, including, but not limited to, financial support, personnel conditions, intellectual property, equal opportunity, and sexual harassment.
- Administers appropriate regulatory activities designed to ensure campus-wide and UC system-wide accountability aimed at ensuring academic quality standards and other institutional policies and regulations related to graduate students.
- Encourages timely completion of graduate degrees by monitoring student degree progress, encouraging faculty advising and mentoring, and ensuring fair and equitable treatment of all students.
- Provides campus-wide student services that facilitate academic progress.
- Enhances access, representation, and the educational experience of underrepresented students in order to achieve the University's diversity objectives. Develops institutional initiatives to enhance the pool of qualified applicants and, by implementing Graduate Council policies, ensures the academic excellence of entering students.
- Works with the Graduate Council to develop local graduate education policies. Provides information, institutional data, and analysis of issues impacting graduate education to support the Council's policy functions, and recommends new policies. Implements Graduate Council policies and provides outcome assessment and analysis.
- Works with the Graduate Council in evaluating new graduate degree program initiatives and assessing continuing programs.

- Provides central administrative services that help sustain and improve the quality of graduate education.

### ***B. The Role of Graduate Council***

The Graduate Council is a standing committee of the Academic Senate, Merced Division. In keeping with the University's commitment to the philosophy of shared governance, the Graduate Council sets policies and standards for graduate admission and eligibility for fellowships and assistantships; establishes policies relating to graduate degrees; approves changes in degree requirements; establishes procedural rules for graduate study; and sets policy for satisfactory academic progress, graduate student course loads, transfers of academic credit, part-time study, and leaves of absence. The Graduate Council reviews all proposals for new degree programs and carries out, on behalf of the Academic Senate, mandated periodic reviews of existing graduate programs through its representation on the Periodic Review Oversight Committee.

Graduate Council may delegate to the Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education routine administrative decisions related to the regulations and policies of the Graduate Council and other matters to its committees or executive officers. The Graduate Division implements policy for graduate education on behalf of the Graduate Council.

Representatives include members of the Academic Senate, the Graduate Dean (ex-officio), one graduate student, and two staff consultants (at the discretion of the Graduate Council Chair). One Council member is appointed campus representative to the UC Systemwide Academic Senate Coordinating Committee on Graduate Affairs (CCGA). For more information, please visit the Academic Senate website (<http://senate.ucmerced.edu/GC>).

### ***C. The Role of the Graduate Group Chair***

The Graduate Group Chair is a Senate voting member of the Merced Division who is the official faculty representative of the Graduate Dean and liaison to the Graduate Council in matters affecting a particular Graduate Group, which includes faculty and student members. A close working relationship is established between the Group Chair and the Graduate Division. The Graduate Dean is dependent upon the experience and judgment of Graduate Group Chairs, and upon their recommendations, in matters requiring the Graduate Dean's action. The Graduate Division staff provides information to the Group Chairs on an ongoing basis and responds to requests for special assistance.

The Graduate Group Chair is responsible for supervising graduate study in their Graduate Group, including planning and carrying out graduate student recruitment, ensuring that each graduate student is assigned an individual Faculty Advisor and mentor, ensuring the progress of graduate students through the program, determining resource needs and administration of the group's budget, determining both graduate course offerings each semester and curriculum changes, and serving as the graduate group's Faculty Accreditation Organizer.

The Graduate Group Chair is appointed by the Graduate Dean for a term that shall not extend beyond that specified in the graduate group's bylaws. When a Graduate Group Chair vacancy occurs, or is anticipated, the Graduate Division sends the appropriate graduate group faculty a call for nominees for Graduate Group Chair. After consultation with the graduate group faculty and Lead School Dean, the Graduate Dean appoints the Graduate Group Chair and communicates the appointment with the graduate group faculty and Lead School Dean.



### ***D. The Role of the Lead Dean***

The Lead Dean is an Academic School Dean, who, at the request of the faculty in a Graduate Group, agrees to provide administrative support to the activities of said group. As requested, the Lead Dean assists the Graduate Dean in identifying conflicts of interest and in some issues of dispute resolution.

## **II. ADMISSIONS**

### ***A. Admissions Policy***

Admission to graduate study at University of California, Merced is by authority and action of the Graduate Dean according to Academic Senate regulations and policies established by the Graduate Council of the University of California, Merced. Regular admission to a specific graduate program is made by recommendation of a particular Graduate Group Admissions Committee, which serves as the agent of the faculty. Graduate groups recommend applicants for admissions; the Vice Provost and Graduate Dean has the final authority to grant admissions to graduate study at UC Merced. Applicants who do not meet the basic requirements for graduate admission will be considered on an exception basis by the Graduate Dean. The staff of the Graduate Division is available for assistance and consultation in the admissions process.

The basic requirements for admission are adequate preparation for successful graduate study, and academic objectives that can be reasonably satisfied within the specific program. The Graduate Group and the Graduate Division evaluate applications for admission through assessment of official transcripts of previous academic work (to ensure the candidate has a minimum undergraduate GPA of 3.0 at an institution with degree standards equivalent to those of the University of California), three letters of recommendation, and the applicant's Statement of Purpose. Some Graduate Groups may also require official score results from exams such as the GRE, GRE Subject test and GMAT. In addition to these minimum requirements, the Graduate Group Admissions Committee may also consider the applicant's: (1) academic preparation for the graduate curriculum; (2) intellectual capacity; (3) motivation and maturity (because of their strong relationship to performance); and (4) specific areas of academic interest. An applicant might be denied admission because of a lack of strength in any of the first four areas, or because the program does not match the applicant's interests in terms of focus and/or academic resources. The requirements listed in this handbook are minimum standards, and individual programs have the prerogative to apply more stringent requirements. Individual graduate programs may require other materials, such as examples of previous work.

Students who do not meet these degree requirements may be accepted by exception when balanced by other positive indicators of potential. Graduate group chairs submit exception requests to the Graduate Dean as they arise (see Section C5 below for additional information).

The number of applicants each year who meet the minimal requirements for admission is substantially larger than the number that can be supported by the available university resources (faculty, laboratories, libraries, funding). A fundamental principle is that University of California graduate programs are not required to accept all applicants who meet a minimum standard, nor must they fill the available spaces on a first-come, first-served basis. The objective of each Graduate Group Admissions Committee is to admit the applicants who are best qualified. In this context, "best qualified" is measured in terms of an applicant's potential achievement (in both graduate study and subsequent careers), and their potential contribution to the University's missions of education, research, diversity, and public service.

## ***B. The Application Process***

### **1. Requirements for All Applicants**

#### ***1.1 Application Fee***

An application fee must be paid for each and every graduate application to each graduate program on each University of California campus. Applications will not be processed until application fees have been received. The application fee is applied to the administrative cost of processing all applications received, and is non-refundable under any circumstances, regardless of outcome, the date of filing, time of review, or if, for whatever reason, the application is withdrawn. Application fees may be paid by graduate groups, departments, schools, the Graduate Division, or other parties, e.g. in cases of financial need or other extenuating circumstances.

#### ***1.2 Transcripts***

One official transcript must be submitted for each previous post-secondary academic institution attended by the applicant. Transcripts should be sent directly to the UC Merced Graduate Division by the Registrar of the issuing institution. Official records are original documents, issued by the institution, which bear the actual signature of the registrar and the seal of the issuing academic institution. When students have final work in progress at the time of the first application, a final official transcript covering that work and certifying the award of any degree must be received before the student is officially enrolled in the second semester of a graduate program at UC Merced.

#### ***1.3 Letters of Recommendation***

Three letters of recommendation, preferably from professors or instructors in the proposed field of study, are required. As a result of federal and state legislation, letters of recommendation are open to inspection by the applicant, unless a voluntary statement waiving the applicant's right of access to the letter of recommendation is submitted. Applicants may choose to waive their rights at the time of application. Once the application is submitted, the applicant may not rescind their decision.

#### ***1.4 Statement of Purpose***

The Statement of Purpose provides important information to the Admissions Committee in their decision. It helps determine whether the applicant's academic objectives fit with the graduate program to which admission is sought. Some Graduate Groups may request separate research and personal statements while others may combine this into one statement of purpose; see the specific Graduate Group website for guidance.

UC Merced is dedicated to actively recruiting and retaining a graduate student body that brings together individuals from various backgrounds and with diverse life experiences. The personal statement provides admission committees insight into an applicant's background, accomplishments, achievements or contributions that are important in evaluating the applicant for graduate study. Relevant information includes educational, familial, cultural, economic, or social experiences, and challenges or opportunities pertinent to the applicant's academic journey.

### ***1.5 Graduate Record Examination Scores (GRE)***

In certain graduate groups, as specified in their policies and procedures, GRE General Test scores are required for admission to graduate study at UC Merced. For graduate groups that require the GRE, the applicant must request that the Educational Testing Service report scores directly to the UC Merced Graduate Division. Graduate Group Admissions Committees that require the GRE are encouraged to consider GRE scores only as appropriate and relevant to the particular field of study and only as one of a number of indicators of potential for success in graduate study. For a list of graduate groups that require the GRE for admission, please refer to the Graduate Division website.

### ***1.6 Individual Program Requirements***

Individual graduate groups may require GRE Subject test scores, writing samples, statements about research experience, foreign language competence, portfolios of artistic or creative endeavors, or specific testing requirements. These requirements may vary from program to program, however, they must be consistently applied to all applicants within the same program.

## **2. Special Requirements for International Applicants**

### ***2.1 Application***

Applicants who are not citizens or permanent residents of the U.S. are subject to all UC Merced standard admission requirements. In addition, they must provide satisfactory evidence of financial support and English language proficiency in order to obtain the necessary visa documents.

Special care should be exercised when admitting international students. It is unfair to recommend admission in the absence of sufficient English language skills and financial resources. Many students underestimate both the time and the financial resources required for completion of a graduate degree at UC Merced.

Graduates of recognized academic institutions outside the U.S. ordinarily should have completed degree programs representing a minimum of 16 years of schooling with at least 12 years at the elementary and secondary school level. Applicants holding only professional diplomas or higher certificates in accounting, business, physical education, or health education from universities or technical and vocational schools should not apply. Members of professional associations, such as the Institute of Chartered Accountants, are not qualified for graduate standing unless they also hold recognized university-level degrees or titles.

### ***2.2 Evaluation of International Credentials***

International applicants are expected to possess the equivalent of a U.S. bachelor's degree with a satisfactory level of scholarship. The Graduate Division will review international transcripts and/or credentials and provide a supplemental evaluation. This supplemental evaluation will provide both equivalency to U.S. degrees and measures of academic standing.

Graduate Division staff rely on a comprehensive library of international education systems for such evaluation, including the resources of the University of California, World Education Services, and international consulates and embassies. An evaluation will be provided only on the basis of official credentials provided as part of a formal application. Only general information about bachelor's degree equivalency can be provided prior to formal application; for specific credential evaluation prior to application, inquiries may be referred to independent professional

agencies, which provide this service for a fee. Such evaluations are advisory only, and may not be accepted as the sole basis of admission actions.

### ***2.3 Foreign Academic Records***

One set of official records from foreign institutions should be sent directly to the UC Merced Graduate Division. All applicants are required to submit official records from each academic institution attended after secondary school. Official records are original documents, issued by the institution, which bear the actual signature of the registrar and the seal of the issuing academic institution. True copies, facsimiles, or photocopies will be accepted only if the photocopies themselves have been personally signed by an academic or public official who has certified that they are exact copies of the original documents. Each certified copy must also bear the seal and title of the authorizing official. Uncertified photocopies are not acceptable. American embassies or consulates are not authorized to certify academic records.

### ***2.4 Required Records***

Unless academic records and diplomas are issued in English by the institution, the official records in their original language must be submitted with an authorized, complete, and exact English translation. All official academic records must show the dates of applicant's enrollment; all subject or course units, credits, or hours; and grades in each subject. If rank is determined by the results of comprehensive examinations, records should show the examination date and applicant's scores, rank, class, and division. All records must include a complete description of institutional grading scales or other standards of evaluation with maximum grades and minimum marks indicated. The applicant must also submit official evidence of the conferral of all degrees, diplomas, or professional titles and the date of the formal conferral (month and year). These certificates should indicate the exact name of the degree, diploma, or title, as it is known in the country of origin and not in American terms. If applicant is applying prior to the end of the final year of study, a supplementary record showing completion of all remaining course work and evidence of the award of the degree must be received before the student is officially enrolled in the second semester of a graduate program at UC Merced. If applicant has also attended a university in either Canada or the U.S., including any campus of the University of California, the applicant must have the registrar of each institution send an official transcript. Records submitted to UC Merced will not be copied, returned to applicant, or sent elsewhere.

### ***2.5 English Language Proficiency***

#### ***a) Demonstration of English Language Proficiency for Admission:***

Applicants whose primary language is not English are required to demonstrate proficiency in English for admission consideration. Any applicant who spent the majority of their primary and secondary education in a nation/territory where English is not the primary language must take an approved English proficiency examination prior to admission. Proficiency in English may be demonstrated by passing one of two standardized, internationally administered tests: TOEFL (the Test of English as a Foreign Language) or IELTS (International English Language Testing System). Passing scores are defined below. The applicant should take one of these tests at the earliest available date to ensure that the scores are reported in time to meet application deadlines. Applicants will not be admitted if they lack an acceptable proficiency score.

**TOEFL:** The TOEFL is administered by the Educational Testing Service (ETS).

**TOEFL Score Requirements for Admission Consideration:**

- For the **paper-based** test, a minimum score of **550**
- For the **computer-based** test, a minimum score of **213**

**TOEFL iBT (internet Based Testing) Score Requirements for Admission Consideration:** An overall minimum score of 80 for admission. The minimum scores on each section are: Writing – **19**, Speaking – **26**, Listening – **17**, and Reading – **18**.

TOEFL and TOEFL iBT scores that are two years old or older are not acceptable. Results of institutional (non-ETS) administrations of the TOEFL or TOEFL iBT are not acceptable.

**IELTS:** English language proficiency may also be demonstrated by passing the Academic Modules of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) exam.

**IELTS Score Requirements for Admission Consideration:** An overall band score of 6.5 for admission. The minimum band scores on each section are: Writing – **5.5**, Speaking – **8**, Listening – **6**, and Reading – **6**. IELTS test scores that are two years old or older are not acceptable.

Under special circumstances a TOEFL Speaking score below 26 may be accepted towards admission as long as an overall score of 80 is maintained. This does not exempt the applicant from the English-proficiency examination for a Teaching Assistant appointment. At least one semester of teaching is required for graduation from most Ph.D. and some Master's programs.

Score requirements are subject to change. For the most up to date information, see the Graduate Division website <http://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/prospective-students/international-application-information>.

***b) Demonstration of English Language Proficiency for Academic Student Employees***

For any graduate student, if the majority of primary and secondary education was in a nation/territory where English is not the primary language, the student is required to pass an approved oral English-proficiency examination to be considered for appointment as a Teaching Assistant or Teaching Fellow. Proficiency in English may be demonstrated by passing one of two standardized, internationally administered tests: TOEFL (the Test of English as a Foreign Language) or IELTS (International English Language Testing System). Passing scores are defined in Section II.B.2.5. Exceptions and alternative exams may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

A minimum score of at least 26 on the speaking section is required to be appointed as a teaching assistant; Minimum scores on the rest of the test are: Writing – **18**, Listening – **16**, and Reading – **17**, for a total cumulative score of at least 80. Some programs may require higher scores. Please refer to individual program websites for specifics.

For more information regarding oral English proficiency requirements for the purpose of graduate student employment, see Section IV. Graduate Student Employment.

## ***2.6 Verification of Financial Resources***

International applicants are required to certify that they possess sufficient funds to cover all fees, transportation, and living expenses for the first year of their studies at UC Merced. The *Verification of Financial Support* form verifying the amount and source of funds available for graduate study will be forwarded to international applicants upon admission. The required financial verification must be provided before visa forms can be issued. International applicants who have deferred admission must submit an updated *Verification of Financial Support* form before visa documents can be issued.

## **3. Application Deadlines**

Application deadlines may be specific to individual programs, but the latest possible deadline for Fall admission is January 15<sup>th</sup> for students wishing to be considered for internal fellowship awards. Graduate Groups may state earlier deadlines for full consideration for fellowships. If the deadline falls on a holiday or weekend, it is extended to the next working day. Prospective students are advised to visit the Graduate Division website for current deadlines. Late applications may be considered on a space-available basis only.

## ***C. Admission Decisions***

### **1. General Policy**

A major responsibility of the Graduate Dean, in cooperation with the Graduate Group Chairs and the Admissions Committees of the individual graduate groups, is to ensure that each applicant receives fair, reasonable, and timely consideration in the admissions process. The Graduate Division reviews all admission actions on behalf of the Graduate Dean. Programs will be notified immediately when it is determined that such actions do not follow required procedures.

It is important that a decision is made and communicated to the applicant within a reasonable period of time. In most cases, admissions decisions should be made before April 15<sup>th</sup>, which for many graduate groups is the unofficial date by which applicants are expected to accept or decline an admissions offer. Except under unusual circumstances approved by the Graduate Dean, all admissions offers must have decisions received no less than 60 days before the beginning of the semester to which admission is requested. The decision may be to accept the admissions offer, deny it, or to defer admission for a later semester (with approval from the Graduate Group).

### **2. The Admissions Committee Recommendation (ACR)**

When a decision has been reached to admit or deny an applicant, the Graduate Group will notify the Graduate Division. The Graduate Division, upon the Graduate Dean's approval, will send the letter of admission or denial to the applicant. For admissions by exception, a separate memo must be attached to the Graduate Group's recommendation explaining the need for exception. Following review by the Graduate Dean, the Graduate Group will be notified of the Graduate Dean's decision. The letter of admission (or denial) will then be sent to the applicant by the Graduate Division.

### **3. Provisional Admission**

An applicant may be admitted provisionally, pending receipt of items such as the final transcript showing conferral of a degree, or other requirements. All provisions must be noted on the letter of



admission. While the student will be allowed to enroll provisionally, all provisions of admission must be satisfied by the end of the first semester of enrollment. The Graduate Division will warn in writing all students who have not cleared their provisions of admission. Applicants may not be admitted provisionally pending receipt of TOEFL scores unless an unofficial score has been submitted.

#### **4. Conditional Admission**

The Graduate Group may attach specific conditions of admission, such as the satisfaction of certain course work requirements during the first academic year. It is the Graduate Group's responsibility to notify the Graduate Division of any condition(s) at the time of admission. The Graduate Division will include these condition(s), along with any that are attached by the Graduate Dean in the admission letter. Condition(s) attached to admission should not be construed as probation; i.e., graduate students are not admitted "on probation." If the appropriate conditions constitute substantial work at the undergraduate level, admission to Limited Status may be a more appropriate alternative than conditional admission (see section C7 below).

#### **5. Exceptions to Standard Graduate Admission Requirements**

All exceptional admissions must be reviewed by the Graduate Dean before admission is granted. Following review by the Graduate Dean, the graduate group will be notified of the Graduate Dean's decision. A summary of exceptions must be reported to the Graduate Council annually.

##### ***5.1 Low Grade Point Average***

Infrequently, recommendations are received from Graduate Groups to admit an applicant with a cumulative undergraduate grade point average below the required 3.0. It is possible to admit an applicant with a lower grade point average who may appear to be highly qualified based upon graduate GPA, or professional experience. A request for an exception to the minimum GPA of 3.0 may be made in writing from the program to the Graduate Dean. The applicant may be admitted only with approval of the Graduate Dean; and admission often is conditional, based on satisfactory completion of the first year course work.

##### ***5.2 The Bachelor's Degree***

On very rare occasions, recommendations are received from Graduate Groups to admit an applicant who does not appear to have the equivalent of a baccalaureate degree on the basis of formal academic credentials. This should be determined by such means as are deemed academically appropriate by the Graduate Dean. It is possible to admit a highly qualified applicant provided the following criteria are considered:

- a) Inappropriateness of requiring the applicant to complete an undergraduate program because of unusual intellectual maturity, and/or a significant level of achievement in a specialization related to the graduate program of interest.
- b) Demonstrated ability to do graduate level work, as evidenced by published papers or other examples of work in a related area, adequate preparation in foundation area, and/or letters of recommendation.
- c) Evidence of having attained a depth and breadth of intellectual development equivalent to an undergraduate education, including a specialization and/or professional experience

comparable to an undergraduate academic major. It might include a review of the applicant's related work and evaluation of any teaching or research experience by an ad hoc advisory committee composed of regular faculty members.

## **6. Second Advanced Degrees**

The University of California, in general, discourages the duplication of advanced degrees. At the same time, it recognizes that a professional degree does not duplicate an academic degree, and that the holders of either an academic or professional degree may have the pressing need to earn another degree in an area different from that of their existing graduate degree(s).

The Graduate Dean has delegated the authority to admit students for a second Master's degree to the Graduate Groups. Admission for a second or concurrent Ph.D. is rarely granted, and must be handled as an exception to policy and approved by the Graduate Dean. All requests must be made in writing to the Graduate Dean and should include strong justification for admitting the applicant for a second or concurrent Ph.D., as well as a statement assuring the Dean that the applicant's first Ph.D. is in an unrelated area and that there will be no duplication, transfer, or waiving of coursework.

## **7. Limited Status**

Applicants who wish to undertake post-baccalaureate study at UC Merced, but whose proposed study is not within a graduate degree program, are ordinarily admitted under Limited Status. University of California academic regulations provide for the admission of students to Limited Status for two purposes: (1) to pursue a specific academic program that does not lead to an advanced degree; or (2) to prepare for admission to a graduate or professional program by enrolling for a prescribed set of courses (usually undergraduate courses). The general requirements for admission to Limited Status are the same as those for graduate admission.

The Graduate Dean may offer admission to Limited Status upon the recommendation of a Graduate Group, which has agreed to oversee the student's program. Limited Status students may enroll in graduate courses, but courses taken while in Limited Status will not satisfy residency or minimum graduate-level course requirements for any UC Merced graduate degree program to which the student may eventually be admitted.

Admission to Limited Status is limited for a period of up to two semesters (one academic year). The application and deadlines for Limited Status are the same as those for applications to graduate study. Persons who wish to apply directly for Limited Status should first consult the Chair of the Graduate Group with which the applicant wishes to affiliate. A Graduate Group must recommend admission, define the prescribed course of study, and provide academic advising. Limited Status does not constitute acceptance into a graduate program, nor does it imply admission to a graduate program at some later date.

## **8. Non-degree Graduate Enrollment**

Students may be admitted to a UC graduate school only for the purpose of study leading to an advanced degree. International exchange students or candidates for a degree at an institution other than the University of California may possibly enroll in courses at UC Merced through the Extension Program. Students should refer to the Registrar's website (<http://registrar.ucmerced.edu>) for additional information on applying to this program.

Students enrolled in study-abroad partnership universities are exempt from additional tuition or fees. Additional information is available at the International Programs website (<http://studyabroad.ucmerced.edu>). All others must pay all tuition & fees (including Non-Resident Supplemental Tuition, if applicable).

## **9. Visiting Graduate Students**

A Visiting Graduate Student is an individual, domestic or international, who is enrolled as degree-seeking graduate student at a non-University of California institution and maintaining satisfactory advancement towards the completion of his or her academic degree and invited to conduct short-term doctoral research or participate in a prescribed course of study such as a mentored or independent research project or research collaborations with a faculty member at UC Merced.

All Visiting Graduate Students must be sponsored by a faculty who is a member of the UC Merced Academic Senate and approved by the Lead Dean, Graduate Group Chair and Graduate Dean.

The purpose of the visit must be for one of the following reasons:

1. Academic training: work, training or experience related directly to a student's field of study. Training may include, but is not limited to, internships, practice, and field work. Appropriate activities vary by discipline and may involve sequential or simultaneous activities, either paid or unpaid.
2. Doctoral dissertation research: individual must be advanced to candidacy or the equivalent at the home institution.
3. Prescribed course of study: a non-degree academic visit with a specific educational objective related to the scholar's field of study. Allowable activities include mentored or independent research projects, master's or doctoral research collaborations, and classroom instruction. Visiting Graduate Students are not permitted to enroll in UC Merced courses for credit unless they do so via Extension and pay the appropriate fees.

Graduate students from other UC campuses visiting UC Merced for research or courses complete the Intercampus Exchange form rather than hold a Visiting Graduate Student appointment.

The Lead School Dean is responsible for appointing a Visiting Graduate Student. Visiting Graduate Students may conduct research at UC Merced for a minimum of three weeks to a maximum of two years. The initial appointment period is for up to one year. Reappointment for up to one additional year is contingent upon approval by the faculty mentor and the availability of appropriate resources.

## **10. Denials**

### ***10.1 Notice of Denial***

A Graduate Group denies admission to an applicant by notifying the Graduate Division, including general rationale for the denial. A denial letter will be generated and sent to the applicant by the Graduate Division.

### ***10.2 Denial - Application Incomplete***

Where there is insufficient information for action by the Graduate Group Admissions Committee in time for the current admissions cycle, the Graduate Division is notified that application materials were insufficient. If the applicant would like to be considered for the subsequent Fall semester, a new application must be submitted along with the application fee.

### ***10.3 Appeal of Admission Decision***

To learn more about the factors that led to the decision to deny admission, the applicant should first contact the Graduate Division. An applicant who then wishes to appeal the decision must submit the request in writing to the Graduate Division within 30 calendar days of being notified that their admission was denied. Complaints that due process was not accorded or that the decision was in some way affected by illegal bias will be carefully investigated by the Graduate Division in consultation with the Graduate Group. Whether or not the recommendation is changed to favor admission of the applicant, the result is communicated to the applicant via a letter sent by the Graduate Dean within 60 calendar days of the date the appeals was received by the Graduate Division. If the denial of admission still stands and the applicant wishes to further pursue the matter, an appeal to the Graduate Council is the final review step in any graduate admission grievance. The applicant must submit a final appeal to the Graduate Council within 30 calendar days of the written letter from the Graduate Dean. Decisions from the Graduate Council will be communicated to the applicant within 60 calendar days of the date the final appeal was received by the Graduate Council.

## **11. Deferral of Admission/Postponement of Matriculation**

When an applicant has been admitted and accepts admission to pursue graduate study at UC Merced, a request for deferral of admission is considered as admission to a later semester. The request for deferral must be made in writing to the academic program and will be considered by the Graduate Group Chair. If approved, deferrals may be granted for a maximum of two semesters from the original semester of admission. Requests for deferral of admission should be made at least 60 days prior to the first day of the semester of initial admission. Late requests must be approved by the Graduate Dean. Deferral decision letters will be sent to applicants by the Graduate Group chair, with a copy sent to the Graduate Division. Deferral of admission does not automatically guarantee deferral of any graduate employment or fellowship support offer.

### ***D. Readmission***

A graduate student who has previously withdrawn from UC Merced or whose graduate student status has lapsed may request readmission to graduate study by submitting an *Application for Readmission* (<http://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/sites/graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/files/documents/applicationforreadmission.pdf>). Payment of the non-refundable Application for Readmission fee is required. A new statement of purpose and transcripts of any additional academic work completed since last enrollment at UC Merced must be submitted, and submission of new letters of recommendation is advised. Files of inactive students who have not completed a graduate degree at UC Merced are retained in the Graduate Division for five years after the last semester of enrollment.

All applications for readmission are subject to the same careful review as those of new applicants. If readmitted, a student's previous academic work will be applied toward the requirements for an advanced degree only with the approval of the Graduate Group Chair and the Graduate Dean. Prior to formal readmission, the applicant should be advised in detail about the requirements that must be satisfied for completion of the advanced degree and a timetable for completion should be established. A copy of the letter conveying the requirements for readmission should be sent to the Graduate

Division. A readmitted student must satisfy the academic requirements in effect at the time of readmission and may be required to satisfy certain program requirements a second time, including formal advancement to candidacy.

A readmitted student will be expected to complete one academic semester in residence before receiving an advanced degree, which will be conferred no earlier than the second semester following readmission.

### **III. FINANCIAL SUPPORT: AWARDS**

#### ***A. General Policy***

Awards directly support the training and education of graduate students and, hence, are not forms of graduate student employment (see Section IV) and do not have work expectations. Awards have the flexibility to pay for tuition & fees, to pay for a portion of fees, and/or be direct payments to students. Awards may be funded by the Graduate Division, a School, a Graduate Group, faculty, and/or an external agency that have the funds to do so. All awards should follow a transparent award process that allows all eligible students the opportunity to receive awards with equal consideration.

In this section, awards refer to grants, scholarships or fellowships, unless otherwise explicitly stated.

#### ***B. Definition of Terms in Awards Process***

- ***Monthly Disbursed Award*** - Monthly Disbursed awards are awarded on a monthly basis.
- ***Lump-sum Award*** - Lump-sum awards are awarded as a single disbursement.
- ***Tuition & Fee Award*** - Tuition & Fee awards generally cover, in full or in part, tuition, student services, graduate student health insurance fees, and/or non-resident supplemental tuition.
- ***Full-Fellowships*** - Full-Fellowships refer to awards that pay tuition and fees in addition to a disbursement amount to a student. These are most commonly awarded with the intent that the student will not need to seek employment within or outside of the University.
- ***Merit-based Award*** - Any award that is based on the merit and academic promise of a student.
- ***Need-based Award*** - Any award that is based on the financial need of a student.
- ***Diversity Award*** - Any award that includes a diversity requirement.
- ***Travel Award*** - Any award specifically to support the student's travel and that is awarded prior to the student's travel date(s).
- ***Research Award*** - Any award that specifically supports the student's graduate research. This is not to be confused with a Graduate Student Researcher appointment (see Section IV), which usually supports the faculty's research.

## ***C. Funding Sources***

### **1. Internal**

An internal, or intramural, award for a graduate student is defined as a University-funded award that is offered to a student formally admitted and/or enrolled in graduate study in a Doctoral or Master's program at the University of California. These are typically funded by UC Merced generated funds, state funds, UC system-wide funds, or benefactors of UC Merced.

#### ***1.1 Funding Model***

Prior to each academic year, the Graduate Dean will communicate the internal funding model to Graduate Groups and Graduate Council for the upcoming academic year, which is intended to provide the Schools, Graduate Groups, and faculty a consistent and predictable flow of internal funds for their graduate students from year to year.

### **2. External**

An external, or extramural, award is defined as an award that is funded by sources external to the University of California and intended to financially support a graduate student formally admitted and/or enrolled in graduate study in a Doctoral or Master's program at UC Merced. Extramurally funded awards are awarded primarily on the basis of outstanding scholarly promise or achievement.

Awards are typically funded by federal agencies, state agencies, foundations, or other entities separate from UC Merced. Examples include, but are not limited to, the Department of Education GAANN Fellowships, NIH and NSF training grants, NSF Graduate Research Fellowships, and Ford Foundation Fellowships. However, UC Merced serves in a custodial role and usually administers the funding, including disbursements to the student.

The Graduate Division receives information about extramural award opportunities, and provides general assistance to students who wish to apply for these sources of support. Special notices of award competitions administered by the Graduate Division will be distributed to Graduate Groups and/or graduate students via an electronic mailing list.

#### ***2.1 Institutional Review or Signature***

Award applications requiring “institutional review or signature” of an “officer” or “official” of the University must be routed by the applicant to the Sponsored Projects Office (SPO) within the timeframe specified by SPO for review. Once the applications are received, Sponsored Projects Office staff members review and approve the proposals. It is only after this process is complete that the proposal may be submitted to external agencies.

#### ***2.2 Role of the Sponsored Projects Office***

When institutional submission is required, the Research Administrator at SPO reviews the application for completeness and to make sure the information is consistent with the agency's requirements, and that the agency is in line with the mission and policies of the University. Submission of applications for direct award fellowships to the individual, and not to the UC Board of Regents, are the responsibility of the student or program.



### ***2.3 Student Research Requiring Special Protocol***

All proposals that suggest the use of hazardous materials, vertebrate animals, or human subjects will be copied to the appropriate campus authority. Some proposals may require Institutional Review Board approval prior to submission.

## ***D. Conditions of Awards***

### **1. Admission to Graduate Study**

The admission letter may contain or be accompanied by an offer of financial support with the condition of formal admission and enrollment. An offer of financial support may not be presented to a prospective student who has not first been offered admission.

### **2. Council of Graduate Schools in the United States Resolution**

UC Merced subscribes to the United States Council of Graduate Schools resolution concerning financial awards for entering graduate students, which states: "Acceptance of an offer of financial aid (such as a graduate scholarship, fellowship, traineeship, or assistantship) for the next academic year by an actual or prospective graduate student completes an agreement which both student and graduate school expect to honor. In those instances in which the student accepts the offer before April 15 and subsequently desires to withdraw, the student may submit, in writing, a resignation of the appointment at any time through April 15. However, an acceptance given or left in force after April 15 commits the student not to accept another offer without first obtaining a written release from the institution to which a commitment has been made. Similarly, an offer by an institution after April 15 is conditional on presentation by the student of the written release from any previously accepted offer. It is further agreed by the institutions and organizations subscribing to the above Resolution that a copy of this Resolution should accompany every scholarship, fellowship, traineeship, and assistantship offer."

### **3. Academic Requirements**

#### ***3.1 Units***

Award recipients must be enrolled full-time in at least 12 units of permissible coursework in a given semester, including course credits for supervised research or teaching occurring during the academic year, such as 295, 299, and 399 units. Financial support will not be given to students with part-time status.

#### ***3.2 GPA***

Award recipients must have a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher in the most recently earned degree.

#### ***3.3 Satisfactory Academic Progress***

Award recipients must maintain satisfactory academic progress toward the degree objective (see Section VI).

### **4. Educational Leave**

Graduate students on an Educational Leave are ineligible to receive financial support.

## **5. Non-degree or Filing Fee Status**

Graduate students in non-degree or Filing Fee status are ineligible to receive financial support.

## **6. Deferment**

Deferment of an admissions offer to a later term does not guarantee an automatic transfer of offers for funding support. Students who are approved for admissions deferment should consult with their Graduate Group on funding support availability.

## **7. Use of Funds**

Unless specifically stated by the awarding agency or UC Merced, awards may be used for costs of attendance (i.e. tuition, fees, books and supplies) or for general support (living, transportation, and personal expenses) necessary to support the pursuit of educational and career goals.

## **8. Student Loan Impact**

Per federal guidelines, most awards and tuition support are taken into consideration when determining student loan eligibility. If a graduate student accepts a federal student loan, accepting an award as well could, and in most cases does, reduce their student loan eligibility, resulting in a loan overpayment. If so, the award is applied to the overpayment and the remaining balance, if any, is then disbursed to the student. The student's loan debt is then reduced accordingly. Graduate students should check with the Financial Aid office and/or Student's First Center before accepting any award if they are concerned about the impact an award may have on their student loan eligibility.

## **9. Taxes**

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the California Franchise Tax Board (FTB) consider graduate awards (fellowships/scholarship) taxable income. The University does not provide individual tax advice to students, but general questions regarding tax liability for awards should be directed to the Tax Services office.

## **10. Funding Cap**

A funding cap, set by the Graduate Dean, may be placed on any graduate student receiving any amount of internal funds during the academic year or the summer, as long as the rules of the funding cap apply to all students with equal consideration. The cap will only extend to students receiving external funds if they have also accepted internal funds in combination with external funds. Specific information regarding funding caps may be found on the Graduate Division website.

## **11. Hierarchy of Funding for Tuition & Fees**

The hierarchy of funding for tuition & fees is the order in which a funding source is chosen to pay tuition & fees when multiple sources exist at once that could pay. The hierarchy may be set by the Graduate Dean, but will generally follow the order of:

<b>Priority</b>	<b>Internal/External Funds</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>
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1	External	Award	Outside Agency (outside of the United States)*
2	External	Award	US Federal Government Agency*
3	External	Award	Non-US Federal Government Agency*
4	Internal	Benefit of Employment	TA Remissions**
5	Internal	Benefit of Employment	GSR Remissions**
6	Internal	Award	UC Funds (specifically to cover tuition & fees)***
7	External	Benefit of Employment	GSR Remissions**
8	Internal	Award	Other UC Funds

\*In the case of external fellowships awarded to grad students, this hierarchy is true when the awarding agency specifically state they pay fees. If the agency states it “could,” “can,” or “may” pay fees, then we will take the course of action that best benefits the student, when possible and allowable. If no benefit to the student is foreseeable, the hierarchy stays true.

\*\*When appointments are split, the remissions are split proportional to the % of the appointments.

\*\*\*Fellowships with internal funds can be made to specifically pay tuition & fees to reduce the remissions charged to a GSR appointment’s funding source.

## **12. Child Care Program**

A graduate student who has received a full fellowship who has (a) qualified dependent(s) in the custody of the fellow on July 1 is eligible to participate in the campus Child Care Program.

Additional information regarding the program is online at

<http://academicpersonnel.ucmerced.edu/node/300>.

## ***E. Graduate Student Employment***

Experience in research is considered central to the preparation of graduate students for a future career, whether in an academic or research environment. Depending on the field, students may begin work in research under the direction of a Faculty Advisor at various times following admission. Pre-dissertation and dissertation research are guided by the same principles concerning ethical issues and classified or proprietary research. The principal responsibility for conducting research at the University of California is vested in the faculty. In some fields, graduate students may serve as research assistants on sponsored research grants or contracts under the guidance of a faculty member.

Likewise, experience as a teaching assistant (TA) is also considered central to the preparation of a pool of graduate students qualified to teach at post-secondary institutions. Some Ph.D. programs formally require students to serve as TAs, and most expect graduate students to be appointed in a teaching capacity at some point during their graduate training. Serving as a TA is a valuable tool; for example, preparing the student for the oral qualifying examination and the oral defense of the dissertation. Through active involvement in course instruction, TAs gain a firmer understanding of basic course materials, the ability to think on their feet, organize their thoughts, and communicate clearly and effectively. These are skills appropriate for an individual holding an advanced degree; no matter what career path is eventually taken.

Information on graduate student employment opportunities and policies can be found on the Office of Academic Personnel website: <https://academicpersonnel.ucmerced.edu/>

UC Merced Academic Student Employees (ASEs) appointed as Teaching Assistants, Associate Instructors, Teaching Fellows, Readers, and Tutors are covered by a collective bargaining agreement between the Regents of the University of California and the Student Workers Union, International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW) AFL-CIO. The entire agreement is available at: <https://ucnet.universityofcalifornia.edu/labor/bargaining-units/bx/index.html>.

UC Merced Graduate Student Researchers (GSRs) are covered by a collective bargaining agreement between the Regents of the University of California and the Student Workers Union, International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW) AFL-CIO. The entire agreement is available at: <https://ucnet.universityofcalifornia.edu/labor/bargaining-units/br/index.html>

For academic units that appoint graduate student Teaching Assistants, the Registrar has assigned appropriate course codes and listed a 399 course titled, “University Teaching” in the Schedule of Classes. Although use of such a course is not required, it is recommended that graduate students who engage in teaching under the supervision of a member of the UC Merced faculty enroll for one to four units of 399 credit per semester only when this activity is part of the student’s training.

## **1. Academic Eligibility for Appointment**

Appointment as a Teaching Assistant or Graduate Student Researcher, in combination with other campus-wide employment, in any title, may not exceed 50.0% time during any academic semester. Between academic year sessions (semesters) and during the Spring and Summer recesses, appointments may not exceed 100% time. No student is permitted to begin an ASE or GSR appointment if they have not met all of the following applicable academic criteria:

### **a) For *incoming* graduate students:**

- Full-time academic enrollment (12 units) throughout the first semester.
- A cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher in the most recently earned degree.

### **b) For *continuing* graduate students:**

- Satisfactory academic progress toward the degree objective.
- Full-time academic enrollment (12 units) throughout the current semester.
- Completion of 8 units or more of permissible upper division or graduate level credit courses during each of the two most recent semesters of enrollment.
- No more than two incomplete (I) grades still on record.
- A cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher in those courses where a letter grade (A through F) was received.
- Total combined academic student employment service cannot exceed 12 semesters (14 for students enrolled during the Spring 2020 through Spring 2022 semesters); see Teaching Appointment Periods and Limitations.

In addition to the criteria detailed above, all of the following additional qualifications apply for appointment as a Teaching Fellow (pursuant to APM 410 <https://www.ucop.edu/academic->

[personnel-programs/\\_files/apm/apm-410.pdf](http://www.ucop.edu/academic-personnel-programs/_files/apm/apm-410.pdf)):

- A master's degree or equivalent training or advancement to candidacy for a Ph.D. degree.
- At least two years of teaching experience (such as that of a Teaching Assistant) within or outside of the University.
- Within normative time-to-degree.
- Total combined academic student employment service cannot exceed 12 semesters (14 for students enrolled during the Spring 2020 through Spring 2022 semesters); see Teaching Appointment Periods and Limitations.

## **2. Other Factors Impacting Appointment Eligibility**

Other factors that may affect appointment eligibility include, but are not limited to, English language proficiency, length of time in program, candidacy status, established limits on supplementation of University administered fellowships, and traineeship support.

Since 1987, the State of California has required “that each campus of the University of California should require all prospective teaching assistants who will be placed in classroom settings to demonstrate competence in oral communication, including those for whom English is not a native language who should demonstrate competence in an oral exam comparable to the written Test of English as a Foreign Language examination, including but not limited to, the Test of Spoken English examination, and demonstrate an ability to communicate effectively before a group” (Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 41). There is no exception to Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 41.

For any graduate student, if the majority of primary and secondary education was in a nation/territory where English is not the primary language, the student is required to pass an approved oral English-proficiency examination to be considered for appointment as a Teaching Assistant or Teaching Fellow. Proficiency in English may be demonstrated by passing one of two standardized, internationally administered tests: TOEFL (the Test of English as a Foreign Language) or IELTS (International English Language Testing System). Passing scores are defined in Section II.B.2.5. Exceptions and alternative exams may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Preference for employment shall be given to Ph.D. students enrolled full-time in 12 units. In rare circumstances, a part-time graduate student enrolled in 11 units or less of coursework may be appointed as a Reader or Tutor; however, combined campus-wide employment, in any title, cannot be equal to or greater than 25% time during any academic semester. Only graduate students who are enrolled full-time in 12 units or more are eligible for appointment/employment as Teaching Assistants, Teaching Fellows, or Graduate Student Researchers.

A visiting graduate scholar who is enrolled in a degree-granting program or equivalent at an institution of higher education other than the University of California may be eligible for appointment as a Visitor to the University of California to participate in a short-term educational, research, or other academic project under the supervision of a faculty member or other appropriate academic appointee. Appointments to the status of Visiting Graduate Scholar are managed and approved, in accordance with APM 430 ([http://www.ucop.edu/academic-personnel-programs/\\_files/apm/apm-430.pdf](http://www.ucop.edu/academic-personnel-programs/_files/apm/apm-430.pdf)), through the Dean's Office of the school in which the supervising faculty member or academic appointee is a member. Appointment or service as a Visitor constitutes neither employment nor enrollment as a student at UC Merced.

### **3. Service Appointment Periods and Limitations**

Graduate students are encouraged to voluntarily participate in worthwhile University or community activities, such as student government, but they must make satisfactory progress toward their primary academic degree objectives. Before accepting additional obligations (compensated or not), graduate students are urged to consult their Graduate Advisor or the Graduate Group Chair of their academic program. With Graduate Group approval, a student may elect to undertake a University paid activity in addition to a teaching or research appointment. In such cases, however, adjustments must be implemented to stay within the 50.0% time maximum.

Academic Student Employees may be appointed for one semester or a full academic year, and the appointments are self-terminating. Total combined academic student employment service cannot exceed 12 semesters (14 for students enrolled during the Spring 2020 through Spring 2022 semesters). The total service of a graduate student includes all Teaching Assistant, Teaching Fellow, and ASE appointments at all UC campuses, regardless of the appointment percentage (Summer appointments are excluded from these limits). Requests for exceptions beyond this limit will not be approved.

The maximum Academic Student Employee and Graduate Student Researcher appointment limitation is 50.0% time during any academic year semester. The assigned workload determines the percent of time of the appointment. If a graduate student has more than one appointment, the combination of all campus-wide appointments may not exceed 50.0% time during any academic year semester. Between academic year sessions (semesters) and during the Spring and Summer recesses, appointments may not exceed 100% time. Agency-restricted awards may further limit such appointments.

When hiring a student from another academic unit, it is the hiring academic unit's responsibility to coordinate any appointment(s) with the student's Graduate Group and the Academic Personnel Office to determine eligibility for the appointment and ensure that the student is not precluded from accepting employment as a result of some other support the student may be receiving.

### ***F. Non-Resident Supplemental Tuition (NRST) Awards***

Non-resident international Ph.D. students who have not advanced to candidacy are eligible to receive a NRST award for their first four semesters to specifically cover the NRST fee charged to their student account based on the criteria below. They may also petition to the Graduate Dean for an additional two semesters of NRST award that may either be used before candidacy, or be used three or more years after advancing to candidacy (NRST is waived for the first three years post-candidacy for international students). Ph.D. students who are U.S. citizens or permanent residents classified as non-California residents are eligible only during their first two semesters of graduate study at UC Merced. Please note that NRST awards are not guaranteed and subject to available funds.

#### **1. Eligibility Criteria**

NRST may be considered for pre-candidacy registered Ph.D. students meeting all of the following criteria:

- a) Enrolled in 12 units.
- b) A cumulative GPA of 3.0.
- c) Satisfactory academic progress toward the degree objective.



- d) Classification as a non-resident for tuition purposes.
- e) NRST fee is charged to the student account.
- f) Funded by one of the following mechanisms:
  - A Teaching Assistant (TA) appointment, or other graduate student teaching title, totaling 25% FTE or more
  - A Graduate Student Researcher (GSR) appointment, totaling 25% FTE or more
  - An internal Full-fellowship

The following graduate students are not eligible to receive a NRST award. Except under unique and unusual circumstances, in which the Graduate Dean reserves the right to grant an exception, the following graduate students are not eligible to receive a NRST award:

- a) Masters students.
- b) Ph.D. students who are on an external fellowship or receiving other third party funding that covers NRST.
- c) Ph.D. students who are US citizens or permanent residents classified as non-California resident, after their first two semesters of graduate studies.
- d) Self-funded students.

### ***G. Waiver of the Non-Resident Supplemental Tuition (NRST) for Ph.D. Candidates***

Non-resident Ph.D. students who have advanced to candidacy are eligible for a waiver of their NRST for a maximum of three consecutive calendar years. Waiver begins with the first academic term following completion of all requirements (including submission of all forms) for advancement to candidacy. Any non-resident student who continues to be registered, or who re-registers following the three-year maximum allowance, will be charged the full NRST rate that is in effect at that time.

#### **1. Eligibility Criteria**

A registered Ph.D. student who meets all the following criteria is eligible for the waiver of Non-Resident Supplemental Tuition:

- a) Classification as a non-resident for tuition purposes.
- b) Registration in a doctoral program *AND*
- c) Approval by the Graduate Dean to be advanced to doctoral candidacy as of the first day of the semester, as determined by the campus, for which the waiver is assessed.

#### **2. Related Policies**

- a. The NRST waiver will normally not be extended if a student fails to enroll for any regular academic semester during the three-year period. A request for an extension must be approved by the Graduate Dean and will only be granted under exceptional circumstances. Students wishing to obtain such an extension must submit a request in writing to the Graduate Dean. There is no appeal process.
- b. A non-resident student is eligible for the waiver for only one doctoral degree. For example, a student who received the waiver while earning a Ph.D. at one UC campus will not be eligible for the waiver if he or she enrolls at the same or another UC campus for a different doctoral degree.

- c. A student who has earned a Ph.D. at a non-UC institution, and then enrolls at the University of California for a second doctoral degree, is eligible for the waiver.
- d. A student who receives funding from an outside agency to cover the cost of NRST is still eligible for the waiver. The source of a student's funding is not relevant to the assessment.

## **IV. ENROLLMENT AND REGISTRATION POLICY: STUDENT STATUS**

### ***A. Academic Residence Requirements***

#### **1. Academic Year**

According to University of California academic policy, a graduate student is considered to be in residence during an academic semester only if at least four units of academic credit are earned in regular upper division undergraduate or graduate-level courses. Except in cases where off-campus study conforms with Senate Regulation 694—which addresses UC requirements for higher degrees—and is approved by the Graduate Dean in consultation with the student's respective Graduate Group, no graduate student will be recommended for any degree if s/he has not completed at least one year of residence.

#### **2. Summer Session**

Continuing UC Merced graduate students are generally considered to be enrolled students between successive Spring and Fall semesters. More formally, in accordance with Senate regulation 690, residence during a Summer Session may be counted for Ph.D. students only under one of the following conditions: (1) enrollment in an eight-week Summer Session, which counts as one term of residence provided the candidate is enrolled in the equivalent of at least four units of upper division and/or graduate work as given in a regular semester; or (2) enrollment in two consecutive six-week Summer Sessions, which counts as one term of residence provided the candidate is enrolled for the equivalent of at least two units of upper division and/or graduate work in a regular semester. For Masters' students, the same basic criteria apply, except that the two six-week Summer Sessions need not be consecutive.

#### **3. Non-Resident Supplemental Tuition**

All incoming and readmitted graduate students are required to complete and submit a *Statement of Legal Residence* to the Registrar's Office to determine their official residency status by the established deadline. Please visit the UC Merced Registrar's Office website for more information on the deadline (<http://registrar.ucmerced.edu/CAResidency>). Continuing students who would like to petition a change in their residency status must complete a Change of Classification Petition by the established deadline. Questions about California residence and out-of-state tuition fees should be directed to the Registrar's Office.

### ***B. Enrollment Policies and Procedures***

#### **1. Full-Time Enrollment/Registration**

Full-time academic registration is generally expected of all graduate students at the University of California. Full-time registration is defined as: (1) payment of applicable University fees; and (2)

enrollment in at least 12 units of coursework in a given semester, including course credits for supervised research or teaching occurring during the academic year, such as 295, 299, and 399 units. See Section V.A.2 for definition of full-time enrollment during Summer.

University-administered fellowships, graduate student researcher appointments, and academic student employee appointments require enrollment in 12 units during regular academic semesters.

Graduate students may enroll in upper-division courses with the approval of their faculty academic advisor and Graduate Dean, but such courses are not considered to be part of any graduate program and will not count toward satisfying degree requirements.

### ***1.1 Courseload Limitations***

Graduate students should not normally enroll for more than 12 units per semester in graduate-level coursework, or 16 units in upper-division undergraduate courses, or a proportionate number in combination.

Course credit that undergraduate students receive for graduate level courses can only be used for undergraduate credit or in some cases used toward graduate degree requirements. Credits earned cannot be used for both graduate degree and undergraduate degree requirements.

## **2. Part-Time Enrollment/Registration**

In most instances, completion of an advanced degree at UC Merced requires full-time study. However, UC Merced recognizes that a legitimate need may exist for part-time study, and, therefore, is committed to facilitating these opportunities whenever academically feasible. In some cases the Graduate Dean will approve part-time status for terminal master's degree candidates, when part-time study has been judged academically feasible by the Graduate Group and approved by UC Merced's Graduate Council. Upon recommendation by the Graduate Group, students admitted to a Ph.D. program may be approved for part-time status by the Graduate Dean on an *ad hoc* basis for up to two consecutive academic year semesters. Requests for part-time status must be submitted in writing to the Graduate Dean and signed by the Graduate Group Chair and the graduate student's Faculty Advisor.

UC Merced policy defines part-time enrollment at the graduate level during the academic year as enrollment in one (1) to eleven (11) units per semester. Within the guidelines and limitations listed below, graduate students may petition for part-time status:

- Students enrolling in 7-11 units: The student needs to have an approved petition for part-time status from the Graduate Dean. Students approved for 7-11 units shall pay 100% of full-time Resident Tuition, the full cost for all other student fees (i.e. student services, health services, transportation), and 100% of the Non-resident Supplemental Tuition (if applicable).
- Students enrolling in 1-6 units: The student needs to have an approved petition for part-time status from the Graduate Dean. Only students who receive an approved part-time petition from the Graduate Dean for 1-6 units are eligible for the reduced tuition. If approved, students shall pay one-half of full-time Resident Tuition, the full cost for all other student fees (i.e. student services, health services, transportation), and one-half of the Non-resident Supplemental Tuition (if applicable).

If a student requesting part-time status and is concerned about their financial aid loan eligibility, they should visit the Financial Aid Office and/or the Student's First Center prior to requesting

part-time status to discuss the full implications of reducing their unit enrollment. Non-residents who have advanced to candidacy, and are already receiving a waiver of NRST, will not receive any additional reductions in their tuition costs.

### ***2.1 Guidelines to Establish Part-Time Eligibility***

- a) The student must meet the standards for part-time study as described in this document.
- b) A completed *Petition for the Reduced Fee/Part-Time form* and a memo of support from the Faculty Advisor must be submitted to the Graduate Division. The memo should be a self-explanatory document, in that it should include sufficient detail to allow the Graduate Dean to evaluate independently the need for, and feasibility of, part-time status for the graduate student. The minimal elements to include in the support memo are:
  - 1) a brief explanation of the need for the part-time status request
  - 2) a statement of how part-time status might impact the student's progress toward degree, and steps to be taken to minimize any negative impact; and
  - 3) an indication of when part-time status would, if approved, begin and end (e.g., Fall 20XX -Spring 20XX).
- c) To be effective for that academic semester, the Petition must be received by the Graduate Division for approval by the Graduate Dean prior to the start of instruction for that semester.

### ***2.2 Part-Time Limitations and Related Policies***

- a) **Purpose:** Unless enrolled in an approved part-time master's degree program, approval of part-time enrollment status may be granted only for reasons of occupation, family responsibilities, health, or professional development.
- b) **Fellowships:** All University fellowships require full-time enrollment in 12 units of graduate-level courses. For extramural fellowships, students must refer to and adhere to the individual agency guidelines established by the sponsor.
- c) **Academic Appointments:** Part-time status may affect academic appointments/employment. Please see Section IV (Academic Appointments and Graduate Student Employment) herein for more information.
- d) **Student Loans:** All students considering applying for part-time status should be cautioned that, in most instances, they will no longer be eligible for deferment of student loan repayment obligations. It is the student's responsibility to discuss the matter with his or her loan agency.
- e) **Maximum Time:** Petitions for part-time status may be requested for a maximum of two consecutive semesters. To continue after a second consecutive semester on part-time status, the student must submit a new petition. The completed Petition for Reduced Fee Part-Time Petition must be submitted prior to the start of instruction for that semester to Graduate Division.
- f) **Enrollment Limits:** If the student who pays the reduced tuition exceeds the approved part-time enrollment limit of seven units at any point in any semester for which part-time status is requested and approved, the student will be billed by UC Merced for the balance of the respective semester's full-time student fees (including Non-Resident Supplemental Tuition, if applicable) and will not be permitted to register for a subsequent semester until those required fees are paid in full.
- g) **International Students:** Ordinarily, international graduate students are not eligible for part-time enrollment because of overriding federal regulations governing student visa status. International students who are eligible to petition for part-time status are required to obtain

written approval from the Office of International Affairs prior to submitting a request to the Graduate Division.

### **3. Late Enrollment**

Students enrolling after the first day of instruction will be assessed a late registration fee. For more information, students must contact the Students First Center.

The campus' budgetary allocation in support of graduate education is calculated on the basis of Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) enrollment at the end of the third week of the semester and for three years following advancement to candidacy. Therefore, Graduate Groups should strongly encourage their students to register no later than the end of the third week of classes.

### **4. Lapse of Status: Did Not Enroll**

Graduate students are expected to remain continuously enrolled in their degree program while progressing toward their degree. A Lapse of Status will occur under any of the following conditions:

- a) If a student fails to register in a semester by the 15<sup>th</sup> day of instruction (i.e., pay fees and enroll in units).
- b) If an Educational Leave Program (ELP), or permission to pay the Filing Fee in lieu of registration, has not been submitted and approved by the student's academic program and the Graduate Division by the established deadline (See Section V.C.4).
- c) If a student fails to comply with any provisions of admission to UC Merced.

Students wishing to re-enroll after a lapse of status must submit an *Application for Readmission*. (See Section V. B. 5 below).

### **5. Lapse of Status: Readmission**

Prior to resuming graduate study at UC Merced, a student who previously withdrew, or who failed to meet the continuous registration requirement, must request readmission from the Graduate Division by submitting an *Application for Readmission* form with the full, non-refundable application fee applicable at that time. However, a graduate student who was not enrolled within the previous two years should submit, in addition to a completed *Application for Readmission*, an updated statement of purpose and transcripts covering all academic work since his/her last enrollment at UC Merced. Students applying to a different program must submit a new Online Admissions Application with all required documents.

Refer to Section II.D. for additional information regarding readmission process.

### **6. Enrollment in University Extension**

If a graduate student wishes to enroll for credit in a University Extension course while registered or while on approved Educational Leave, the student's proposed program of study must be approved in advance by the Graduate Dean with the written recommendation of the student's Faculty Advisor. See Section VII. G. Transfer of Credit, for information on transfer of credit for courses taken in University Extension.

## **7. Withdrawal**

### ***7.1 Withdrawal Between Semesters***

A student who plans to withdraw after completing all academic work for the latest semester of enrollment, but prior to enrollment and fee payment for the subsequent semester, should submit a written notice of intent to the Graduate Division and to their Graduate Group as soon as the decision to withdraw has been made. The student has three options in such cases: (1) to file a Cancellation/Withdrawal form with the Graduate Division; or (2) to apply for Part-time Status; or (3) to apply for an Educational Leave Program (ELP). A student in good academic standing who intends to re-enroll after missing no more than two consecutive semesters may wish to choose the latter to avoid a lapse of student status and the necessity to apply for readmission.

### ***7.2 Withdrawal After Enrollment and Fee Payment for a Semester***

A student who decides to leave UC Merced after paying fees and enrolling for a regular academic session, but before the end of that semester, and who wishes to cancel enrollment in all classes in which enrolled, must file the *Cancellation/Withdrawal* form with the Graduate Division. If unable to do so in person because of emergency or serious illness, the student should notify the Graduate Division by mail or e-mail as soon as possible so that timely assistance may be provided. Failure to do so will result in the assignment of failing grades in all courses in which the student is enrolled, and will jeopardize further academic standing.

### ***7.3 Withdrawal Without Approved Educational Leave Program (ELP)***

A student who withdraws, but has not been granted an Educational Leave Program (ELP) by the Graduate Dean, must apply for readmission in order to resume graduate study at UC Merced. See section V.B.4 Lapse of Status Readmission for more information.

## **C. Registration Policy**

### **1. Continuous Registration Policy**

A graduate student is expected to register full-time for each regular academic session (Fall and Spring semesters) until all requirements for an advanced degree or credential have been completed.

Registration at UC Merced consists of two separate steps: (1) payment of applicable student fees; and (2) enrollment in at least 12 units (or approved part-time enrollment). Both steps, payment of fees and enrollment in classes, must be completed for the student to be officially registered.

### **2. Registration Procedures**

Detailed registration procedures are outlined on the Registrar's website (<http://registrar.ucmerced.edu>). Students are personally responsible for ensuring that their course enrollment is correct and completed, and their fees paid, no later than the 15<sup>th</sup> day of instruction. Unless granted an official Educational Leave Program (ELP) or approval to pay the Filing Fee in lieu of registration, a graduate student who does not register (pay fees and enroll in classes) for any semester will be considered to have withdrawn from the University. In such cases, student status and candidacy for any degree will lapse, and any student wishing to continue with their graduate studies at UC Merced will be required to apply for readmission.



### **3. *In-Absentia* Registration**

The *University of California Fee Policy for Graduate Student In Absentia Registration* allows graduate students to take leaves related to research, practicum training, or course work that are at a significant distance from the UC Merced Campus, and remain enrolled in the University while paying 15 percent of the combined Tuition and Student Services Fees, the Designated Campus Based fees, and the Graduate health insurance (GSHIP) fees. In Absentia Registration is for the academic year only.

Students must be enrolled full-time (12 units) and in good academic standing (GPA of 3.0) to be eligible for the reduced in absentia fee. The research opportunity, practicum training, or coursework leave must be directly related to the student's degree program; of a nature that makes it necessary to be completed at a significant distance from the UC Merced Campus for at least one full academic term; involve only indirect supervision appropriate to evaluating the student's academic progress and performance; and involve no significant in-person collaboration with UC faculty during the in absentia period.

Doctoral students must have advanced to candidacy by the time the *in-absentia* status would begin. Doctoral students are eligible to register *in-absentia* for up to two years (4 semesters).

Master's students must have completed at least one year of course work by the time the *in absentia* status would begin. Master's students are eligible to register *in absentia* for up to one year (2 semesters). Students in self-supporting graduate programs are not eligible for in absentia registration.

The *Request for In-Absentia Registration* form must be submitted to the Graduate Division by the deadline date noted on the form. International students planning on registering *In-Absentia* must also inform the Office of International Affairs. *In-Absentia* registration is approved by the Faculty Advisor, Graduate Group Chair, and the Graduate Dean. The student's account will then be adjusted accordingly. It is the student's responsibility to ensure fee payment by the deadline established by the Registrar.

### **4. Educational Leave Program (ELP)**

A student is expected to enroll for each regular academic session unless a formal Educational Leave Program (ELP) is granted. An ELP may be granted for up to one academic year (2 semesters) if, following review of the student's academic record, such leave is deemed consistent with the student's academic objectives and progress toward degree. Written approvals are required of the Faculty Advisor, the Graduate Group Chair, and the Graduate Dean. It is important that applications for ELP status be submitted to the Graduate Dean prior to the first day of instruction for the semester for which approval is sought, so that a student whose application is not approved will be able to enroll prior to the deadline. If an ELP request is approved and the student subsequently becomes ineligible for ELP status (e.g., GPA falls below 3.0 in the semester prior to leave), approval for ELP status will be reevaluated and may be rescinded.

#### ***4.1 Purpose***

An Educational Leave Program (ELP) is intended to accommodate the temporary interruption of the student's academic program. The reason(s) for requesting a ELP must be consistent with University policy and guidelines as outlined below, and with the student's academic program

guidelines.

#### ***4.2 Eligibility Guidelines***

A leave may be granted when a student plans to be away from the University of California for one of the following reasons:

- a) Serious illness or other temporary disability.
- b) Concentration on an occupation not directly related to the student's academic program.
- c) Responsibilities related to family obligations.
- d) Temporary interruption of the student's academic program for other appropriate reasons.

#### ***4.3 Limitations to ELP***

ELP policy does NOT apply under the following circumstances:

- a) If a student will be absent from the campus and at a significant distance from the UC Merced Campus while continuing to pursue graduate research or scholarly activity. (Students engaged in such activity at a significant distance must register *In-Absentia*.)
- b) If a student must leave the academic program for more than two consecutive semesters. Under such circumstances, students should withdraw and apply for readmission at the time he/she expects to resume graduate study at UC Merced.
- c) If a student requests such action retroactively.
- d) If a student has not completed at least one semester of graduate study at UC Merced.
- e) If a student has not demonstrated satisfactory academic progress. See Section VI. Academic Standards for definition of satisfactory progress.

An ELP may be terminated at the written request of the student before the end of the approved leave period. However, approval by exception is required if the student intends to register after the second week of instruction. A student who has not attained the academic objective for which he/she was admitted, and who either fails to enroll or secure a formal leave, loses graduate student standing in the University.

#### ***4.4 Procedures for Requesting an ELP***

A request for an ELP requires submission of an *ELP* form. The form should be submitted to Graduate Dean prior to the registration deadline for the semester requested. A request for leave submitted after the end of the second week of classes will be granted by exception only. In such cases, the Graduate Group Chair must submit a letter of exception attached to the *ELP* form, and signed by the Faculty Advisor. If the ELP is not approved, the student must formally withdraw or fees are owed. In such cases, the *Cancellation/Withdrawal* form must be submitted prior to the registration deadline for the semester requested in order to avoid payment of late registration fees. Please visit the Graduate Division website for the *ELP* form and *Cancellation/Withdrawal* form (<http://graduattedivision.ucmerced.edu/faculty-staff-resources/forms-publications>).

#### ***4.5 Other Policies Relevant to ELP***

- a) **Academic Appointments and Employment:** A student on an approved leave may not be employed by UC Merced in any academic or research capacity unless they submit a request for an exception that must be approved by the Graduate Dean, following consultation with Human Resources or Academic Personnel, on a case-by-case basis.

- b) **Degree Requirements:** A student on leave cannot take qualifying examinations for advancement to candidacy or final examinations for the degree, nor pursue their graduate studies on the UC Merced campus in any other manner. A student may not receive academic credit for work done at another institution during the leave period unless an exception is approved in advance by the Graduate Dean following recommendation of the Faculty Advisor and Graduate Group Chair.
- c) **Fee Refunds:** The percentage of fees that may be reversed is determined by the number of calendar days (not instruction days) elapsed, beginning with the first day of instruction for the semester. Please refer to the University Catalog ([catalog.ucmerced.edu](http://catalog.ucmerced.edu)) for the most up to date refund schedule.
- d) **Filing Fee Restriction:** Immediately following an ELP, students must register for full-time studies. They will not be eligible to be on Filing Fee status.
- e) **Financial Support:** While on an ELP, a student is not eligible for UC Merced fellowships, University research grants, or financial aid support. In addition, the student will, in most cases, lose eligibility for deferment of student loan obligations and for many types of extramural funding. It is the responsibility of the student to contact their loan agency to verify their loan status before applying ELP.
- f) **Health Insurance:** A student on leave will not be covered by the University of California graduate student health insurance program (GSHIP) unless the student self-pays for continued coverage. Students should contact the GSHIP administrator located in Student Health Services for more information.
- g) **International Students:** In accordance with visa restrictions, a student who is not a permanent resident or citizen of the U.S. may not be permitted to take an ELP. Any exception to this policy requires written approval by UC Merced's Office of International Affairs. Following receipt of such approval, the *ELP* form must then be submitted to the Graduate Division.
- h) **Library Privileges:** A student on leave will lose library privileges. Students should contact the library for more information. In some cases, special arrangements can be made with the library to maintain privileges.

## 5. Filing Fee Status

UC Merced's Academic Senate policy on Filing Fee status applies to students who have completed all requirements for a terminal Master's or Ph.D. degree and are ready for the formal submission of their thesis or dissertation, or the final, formal examination or capstone/culminating project. Filing Fee status may only be used for one semester during the student's graduate training. Students applying for Filing Fee status must be registered in the preceding academic session. A Filing Fee request will not be accepted immediately following an (ELP).

### 5.1 Procedures for Establishing Eligibility for Filing Fee Status

To establish eligibility to pay the Filing Fee, the student must submit a Graduate Division *Filing Fee Petition*. The Petition must be approved by the Faculty Advisor, Graduate Group Chair, and the Chair of the thesis or doctoral committee (if different than the Faculty Advisor), and must certify that all other requirements for the degree have been met. International students must also obtain approval from the Office of International Affairs to go on Filing Fee status. Applications for Filing Fee must be submitted to the Graduate Dean no later than two weeks prior to the beginning of instruction for the semester for which approval is sought. Students who fail to meet the deadline are subject to pay all tuition and fees.

The completed *Filing Fee* form should be submitted to the Graduate Division for final review and approval. If Filing Fee Status is granted, the student is responsible for paying one half of the

Student Services Fee.

### ***5.2 Limitations on Use of University Services While on Filing Fee Status***

While on Filing Fee status, a student may seek faculty involvement for review of his or her dissertation or thesis. A student may also take the final oral examination, if required. However, students may not pay the Filing Fee if they are still conducting research or if any other use of University facilities or faculty time is anticipated. Additional restrictions while on Filing Fee status include:

- a) Loss of eligibility for University-administered financial assistance.
- b) Loss of student services such as health services, including health insurance (GSHIP). Students may, however, arrange to self-pay.
- c) Loss of eligibility status for UC Merced academic and student appointments.
- d) Loss of eligibility in most cases for deferment of student loan repayment obligations and for many types of extramural funding. It is the responsibility of the student to contact their loan agency to verify their loan status before applying for Filing Fee status.

If, after paying the Filing Fee, the student finds it necessary to use the educational facilities of UC Merced in any way other than those described in this section, the student must register for full-time status. Further, if all requirements are not completed during the semester for which the Filing Fee was paid, the student must register for full-time status for any subsequent semester.

## **6. Terminal Master's Students**

Students pursuing a terminal Master's degree may not continue to register as a graduate student subsequent to a degree award unless formally admitted to a doctoral program. To be considered for admission to a doctoral program, the student must submit a new *Application for Graduate Study*, unless otherwise stated in the Graduate Group's policies and procedures.

## ***D. UC Intercampus Exchange Program***

### **1. Definition of Intercampus Exchange**

Through the Intercampus Exchange Program graduate students may take advantage of unique educational opportunities at another University of California campus or facility. Students may also take courses on more than one campus of the University in the same academic session. The program is reserved for those students whose graduate study may be enhanced by work with distinguished faculty or use of facilities and resources accessible only on another UC campus or UC facility.

### **2. Eligibility for Intercampus Exchange**

Students must have completed at least one semester of graduate study at UC Merced and be in good standing to be eligible to apply for the UC Intercampus Exchange Program. The approved *UC Intercampus Exchange Program Application* form must be submitted to the UC Merced Registrar's Office by the established deadline.

### **3. Procedures**

The *UC Intercampus Exchange Program Application* form is available in the Graduate Division

website (<http://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/faculty-staff-resources/forms-publications>) and should be submitted to the Graduate Division at least four weeks prior to the beginning of the school term for which the student is applying. If approved, the student pays fees and enrolls at UC Merced (see sections below) by the published deadlines, and then enrolls at the host campus. Fees at the host campus are waived. Students earn credit toward academic residence requirements at UC Merced, while the host campus provides library privileges and other student services. The exchange student is responsible for complying with the policies, procedures, and deadlines of the host campus Registrar. Although eligible for all regular student services at the host campus, the exchange student is a visitor and not formally admitted to graduate study at the host campus.

### ***3.1 Financial Aid and Intercampus Exchange***

The Registrar reports student status to financial aid lending institutions on a school term basis. If a student's record does not show full-time enrollment, the lending institution may set in motion the process for repayment of the student loan. A student who is approved to enroll in courses on two campuses in a given term will be enrolled in placeholder courses at UC Merced to reflect total enrollment at both UC campuses. Further information on the Intercampus Exchange Program may be obtained from the Registrar's website.

## **4. Joint (Intercampus) Degree Program Students**

Students in joint/intercampus degree programs should also enroll and register as UC Intercampus Exchange Program students when they are taking classes on a participating campus other than UC Merced. There may be some important exceptions to the regular policy on intercampus exchange, including additional services that may be available on the other participating campus, and a more streamlined enrollment/registration procedure. Students should consult with their Graduate Group Chair or the Graduate Division for more information.

## **5. Coursework Credit**

A report of academic work completed while on exchange will be transferred to the student's academic record at UC Merced. Direct arrangements between faculty members on the two campuses involved are encouraged to ensure that courses, seminars, or facilities will be available to meet the student's needs. Whether or not the coursework at the host campus applies toward the student's program requirements is at the discretion of the student's Faculty Advisory Committee. Therefore, the student should consult with the appropriate individual(s) prior to enrolling in a given course.

If a graduate student undertakes course work through the UC Intercampus Exchange Program in the semester in which the degree award is expected, and if that course work is to be applied toward degree requirements, the degree can be conferred only when the approved credit for the course work is posted to the student's UC Merced academic record. In such circumstances, to avoid delays or problems in the degree award process, the student should contact the Registrar of the host campus and order an official transcript of the work completed to be sent directly to the UC Merced Registrar's Office. The student should also notify the Graduate Division in writing that the transcript has been requested.

# **V. ACADEMIC STANDARDS FOR STUDENTS**

## ***A. Progress Toward Degree***

### **1. Satisfactory Progress**

A graduate student is expected to maintain satisfactory progress toward an approved academic objective as defined by the faculty of the program, and in accordance with the Policies and Procedures for the student's Graduate Group, and policies of the Graduate Council and UC Merced, as outlined in this Handbook. Graduate Group Policies and Procedures can be found on the website for each graduate program, as well as on the Graduate Division website. Student progress towards the degree should be assessed at least annually, and this assessment should be provided to students in writing. The Graduate Group should inform the Graduate Division of any action taken with regard to a student's academic record, and should provide copies of any related correspondence between the program and the student.

A graduate student is expected to have a faculty advisor at all times during their graduate studies. In the absence of a faculty advisor, the Graduate Group Chair becomes the student's temporary advisor. It is the responsibility of the student to secure a permanent faculty advisor in a timely manner, according to their respective Graduate Group's Policies and Procedures.

Satisfactory progress is determined on the basis of both the student's recent academic record and overall performance. Minimum criteria for determining satisfactory progress toward degree are outlined below, specific Graduate Groups may have higher standards, as identified in their Policies and Procedures:

- **GPA** - the student must maintain at least a 3.0 cumulative grade point average.
- **Normal Time to Degree** – the student must advance to candidacy and complete the degree within the limitations established by the Policies and Procedures of the student's Graduate Group, in accordance with Graduate Council policy.
- **Grade Reports** - all I, W, U, or NR grades should be reviewed and appropriate action taken as needed.
- **Enrollment Units** - students must be enrolled in at least 12 units of coursework in a given semester, including course credits for supervised research or teaching occurring during the academic year, such as 295, 299, and 399 units, unless part-time status or an ELP has been approved in advance by the Graduate Dean. In cases of approved part-time status, enrollment in seven or fewer units of credit toward the degree is expected each semester.
- **Distribution of units** - the number of upper-division and graduate-level units of credit completed toward degree requirements each semester should be at least eight and no more than 16 units, unless an exception has been approved in advance.
- **Academic Residency** - time in residence prior to advancement to candidacy for the Ph.D. degree should be within acceptable limits (ordinarily, no more than four years).

### **2. Unsatisfactory Progress**

A graduate student who has not demonstrated satisfactory academic progress may be subject to academic disqualification if satisfactory progress is not achieved within one semester of receipt of Notification of Unsatisfactory Performance. In addition, students who have not demonstrated satisfactory academic progress are not eligible for any academic appointment/employment and may not receive fellowship support or other awards.



## ***2.1 Criteria for Determining Unsatisfactory Progress***

Minimal criteria for determining Unsatisfactory Progress are outlined below:

- a) A cumulative grade point average below 3.0; or
- b) A grade point average below 3.0 in two successive semesters; or
- c) Fewer than 8 units completed and applicable toward the advanced degree requirements in the last two semesters; or
- d) Failure to establish a GPA prior to the beginning of the third semester because all courses have been taken for Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory grades; or
- e) Failure to satisfactorily complete required courses or examinations within the period specified by the graduate program; or
- f) Failure to pass a required examination in two attempts; or
- g) Failure to progress academically within the Normal Time to Degree framework specified for the student's graduate program; or
- h) The appropriate faculty committee's evaluation that there has not been satisfactory progress toward completion of the thesis or dissertation.

This said, the professional judgment of the faculty, upon review of all graduate work undertaken by the student, is paramount, and the faculty of a particular Graduate Group may establish more restrictive criteria or additional requirements and standards for satisfactory academic progress, as identified in their Policies and Procedures.

## ***2.2 Notice of Unsatisfactory Progress and Intent of Academic Disqualification***

It is very important to keep students apprised of their progress in their degree program. Faculty Advisors should be direct in communicating orally and in writing with students demonstrating academic difficulties, and should keep a written record of all such communications. As noted in Section VI. A. 1 (Satisfactory Progress) above, student progress should be assessed at least annually, and provided to the student in writing. Notices of Unsatisfactory Progress should be sent in writing and/or via University electronic mail to the student; a copy should also be retained in the Graduate Group files and another copy sent to the Graduate Dean. The notice should include:

- a) specific details on areas that require improvement,
- b) provide an outline for future expectations of academic progress, and
- c) set meeting dates to maintain continuity in advisement.

The purpose of the Notice of Unsatisfactory Progress (commonly known as academic probation), is to provide the student with a period of time (usually at least one academic semester) in which to make the necessary improvement in his/her academic status, and successfully complete their graduate study. If requested by the Graduate Group to do so, the Graduate Dean will also send a Notice of Unsatisfactory Progress to the student.

A graduate student who has received a Notice of Unsatisfactory Progress is not eligible for any academic appointment/employment and may not receive fellowship support or other campus awards. Exceptions must be requested of the Graduate Dean in writing, with an explanation of how the employment would benefit the student's progress.

Graduate Groups may choose to send students notification of *potentially* unsatisfactory progress prior to Notices of Unsatisfactory Progress as an early warning; if this is the practice of the Graduate Group, it will be so noted in the group's Policies and Procedures.

## ***B. Academic Disqualification***

In accordance with Regulation 904 of the Academic Senate of the University of California, Disqualification of graduate students is at the discretion of the Dean of the Graduate Division. At UC Merced, the following policies and procedures govern academic disqualification.

Disqualification means that, for one or more academic reasons, a student is no longer eligible to continue graduate study in her/his graduate program at UC Merced. The term “dismissal” should not be confused with “disqualification.” Dismissal is an administrative action resulting in removal from graduate study based on behavior or conduct, and is governed by the Office of Student Conduct. A graduate student who fails to make satisfactory academic progress may be officially disqualified from the university, in writing and/or via University electronic mail, only by the Graduate Dean and in accordance with the procedures outlined in this section.

If disqualified from a graduate program, a student is no longer eligible to work toward their current degree objective in that program, but is eligible to apply for a lesser graduate degree; in the case of a doctoral student, in that program or in any other graduate program at UC Merced. Admission to another program is to be determined by the usual program procedures and must include consideration of the factors pertaining to the earlier disqualification.

### **1. Disqualification based on Failure of the Qualifying Examination**

A graduate student who fails the Qualifying Examination for a doctoral degree after a second attempt will be automatically disqualified within 15 days of receipt of the Report of the Qualifying Examination Committee. However, grades of “Fail” on the first take of the examination will be reviewed by the Graduate Dean or designee, in consultation with the Graduate Group Chair, prior to disqualifying the student.

### **2. Disqualification based on Unsatisfactory Progress**

A Graduate Group Chair may recommend the disqualification of a graduate student who fails to make satisfactory progress. After consultation with the student’s Graduate Group Chair and Faculty Advisor, the Graduate Dean may send a Notification of Impending Academic Disqualification to a student as determined by any of the factors noted in this section or the previous section on Unsatisfactory Progress.

### **3. Notification of Impending Academic Disqualification**

The student's academic record is reviewed carefully by the Graduate Dean in consultation with the student's Faculty Advisor and Graduate Group Chair. Unless there are indications of procedural error or other substantive mitigating factors to explain the student's unsatisfactory record, the Graduate Dean will notify the student of the impending action in writing. The student then has 30 calendar days from the date on the letter during which the student may appeal this action in writing (see Student Appeals below) or request a second review of their academic performance.

If the student and the Graduate Group mutually agree that the student will terminate his/her status as a graduate student (e.g., a decision to end graduate study with a Master’s degree or a decision to withdraw from graduate study for other reasons), the Graduate Group and student should independently notify the other of this mutual agreement. In all such cases, the Graduate Group

should retain a copy of this documentation between the graduate group and student and send another copy to the Graduate Division.

### ***3.1 Due Process Requirements***

To ensure that a decision to disqualify a student from an academic program is just, certain basic "due process" requirements should be met:

- a) Graduate Groups should post their Policies and Procedures on their website and make students aware of them upon acceptance into the graduate program or within the first few weeks of the student's first semester of enrollment in classes.
- b) Information on University and campus policies affecting graduate students should be provided to all students in the program. These can be found in the UC Merced Graduate Division website, the UC Merced General Catalog and in this Handbook.
- c) Academic standards should be uniformly applied.
- d) Modification of a Graduate Group's Policies and Procedures should be submitted to the Graduate Council for approval in accordance with Academic Senate policy.
- e) Students should be promptly informed of any such modifications as described above, and must be allowed, to complete work under standards operative at the time of their initial enrollment in the program.
- f) Grades should accurately reflect a student's performance in each course.
- g) An attempt should be made to discover if a student lacks the academic qualifications to complete a degree program as early as possible in the student's academic career.
- h) The student's advisory committee should provide him/her with early written Notice of Unsatisfactory Progress and a reasonable period of time (typically one semester) in which to correct all deficiencies.

## **4. Student Appeals**

A student who is subject to an impending academic disqualification has 30 calendar days (from the date of the Graduate Dean's Notification of Impending Academic Disqualification) to respond in writing to the recommendation for disqualification. Student appeals will be considered only if based upon appropriate cause, such as: (1) procedural error; (2) judgments based on non-academic criteria; (3) apparent personal bias; (4) specific mitigating circumstances affecting academic performance; or (5) discrimination on the basis of race, religion, sex or other protected status.

Following this period of time (30 calendar days):

- a) If the student does not respond, a final Notification of Academic Disqualification will be sent to the student by the Graduate Dean, ordinarily within 5 business days of the final date when the student could respond.
- b) If the student does respond, the Graduate Dean may render a final decision immediately if the appeal is straightforward, or the Graduate Dean may assign an Associate Dean or a review committee within the Graduate Division to conduct the review and make a recommendation to the Graduate Dean.

The review committee will submit a recommendation to the Graduate Dean within 10 business days of receipt of the appeal. The Graduate Dean shall notify the student of the decision based on the recommendation of the review committee on the appeal within 5 business days, for a total maximum of 45 days since receipt of the written Notification of Impending Academic Disqualification that initiated the appeal.

Following formal notification of academic disqualification, the student has 10 calendar days to submit a final appeal to the Graduate Dean on procedural grounds. A final decision will be rendered by the Graduate Dean within 5 business days.

The decision of the Graduate Dean is final in all appeals regarding disqualification. Once the Graduate Dean has communicated her/his decision to the student, the matter is closed to any further review.

### ***C. Graduate Standards for Grading***

For a graduate student, only the grades A+, A, A-, B+, B, and S represent satisfactory scholarship, and only coursework in which these grades are received may be applied toward degree requirements. A cumulative GPA below 3.0 is not satisfactory, and a student whose GPA is below that level is subject to academic disqualification. See Section VI.A above (Progress Towards Degree).

#### **1. Course Repetition**

Courses in which a grade below a B (ie: B-), or a grade of U, was received may be repeated only once. Only the most recently earned grades will be used in computing the student's GPA for the first eight units of repeated graduate course work. Thereafter, both the earlier and later grades will be used. Graduate students who have repeated eight or fewer units of upper division or graduate coursework are responsible for verification of their GPA.

#### **2. Pass/Not Pass (P/NP)**

Under no circumstances will courses taken P/NP count toward unit and degree requirements for any graduate degree program. A graduate student may elect P/NP grading for one course only (a maximum of 4 units) per semester. The grade Pass (P) is applied to upper division undergraduate coursework only. It is equivalent to C level work or better, and does not represent satisfactory scholarship for a graduate student. The grade P does not meet the academic criteria for satisfactory progress for university-administered fellowships or for academic appointments/employment. If a graduate student chooses the option of P/NP grading, it is assumed that the course is an elective that does not have any significant relationship to the student's progress in the graduate program.

#### **3. Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory (S/U)**

A grade of Satisfactory (S) is equivalent to a grade of B (3.0) or better. No unit credit is given for a course in which a grade of Unsatisfactory (U) was assigned. S/U grading designation is specified in the CRF.

#### **4. In Progress (IP)**

"In Progress" is a transcript notation restricted to sequential courses extending over two or more semesters, and for which use of the IP notation has been approved by the Graduate Council and the Graduate Group. It indicates satisfactory progress, and should not be assigned if the level or the progress of the work to date is not satisfactory. Upon completion of the last semester of the course sequence, the final grade is assigned for all semesters of the sequence. No unit credit is given until the student has completed the entire sequence.

If a student who was assigned the provisional notation IP for one or several semesters of a course

sequence fails to complete the sequence, the instructor may assign a final grade and request the Registrar to replace the IP with that final grade on the permanent record. In the event that no action is taken to replace the IP with a final grade, the IP will be changed to an Incomplete (I) at the end of the second semester following the semester in which it was originally assigned, or at the end of the semester immediately preceding award of the degree, whichever comes first. Only semesters in which a student is enrolled will be counted in determining the time at which an IP is changed to an I.

## **5. Incomplete (I)**

The grade Incomplete (I) should be given only when a student's work is satisfactory but is incomplete because of circumstances beyond the student's control, and when the student has been excused in advance from completing the semester's work. Students must file a petition with the Office of the Registrar, using the *Incomplete Grade* form ([http://registrar.ucmerced.edu/files/page/documents/incomplete\\_grade.pdf](http://registrar.ucmerced.edu/files/page/documents/incomplete_grade.pdf)), prior to the last day of the semester to receive an Incomplete grade. If the completed form is not received by the Office of the Registrar before the first day of instruction of the next semester, then the I grade will revert to an F, NP, or U.

The I grade should not be assigned when the student is working on a long-term project that is scheduled over more than one semester of enrollment. In such cases, if the project is on schedule, the IP grade should be assigned. When no action is taken to replace an IP notation with a final grade, the IP will be changed to an Incomplete (see Number 4 above). Finally, the grade I should also not be assigned when the student has completed no significant amount of work, or when such work is unsatisfactory.

The number of Incomplete grades accumulated by a student should be monitored and limited carefully, and should be removed as soon as possible. Incomplete grades are an important factor in evaluating academic progress as well as in determining eligibility for employment. The maximum amount of time that an instructor may allow for making up incomplete work is two semesters of enrollment, but stricter limits may be applied. If not made up within the time allowed, an I grade will be changed to an F. Ordinarily, I grades do not affect GPA. However, when computing GPA to determine whether the student meets the minimum GPA requirement for graduation (3.0), I grades are counted as an "F" or "U." A graduate student with an I grade may proceed towards graduation only at the discretion of the Graduate Dean.

## **6. No Report (NR)**

The No Report (NR) notation is made on a student's permanent record in those cases where the student's name appears on the official class roster but the instructor did not turn in a grade for the student.

A student who receives an NR transcript notation should immediately contact the instructor to arrange for the removal or replacement of the notation. The NR may be removed from the student's record by petition. Depending on the circumstances, the instructor may request that the Registrar change the NR to a grade, including the grade Incomplete, or remove the entry for that course altogether from the permanent record. Petitions must be submitted to the Graduate Dean for removal of course from permanent record.

## **7. Withdrawal (W)**

In accordance with UC Merced Academic Senate Regulations, the Registrar will record on a student's permanent academic record a Withdrawal (W) notation for each course the student drops at any time after 15<sup>th</sup> day of instruction and until the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> week of instruction in a semester. A *Course Withdrawal* Form must be signed by the instructor prior to submission to the Graduate Division for final approval.

Courses in which a W has been entered on a student's transcript will be disregarded in determining the GPA. In general, W notations are not considered in determining a student's satisfactory progress; if they are considered, this should be specified in the Graduate Group's Policies and Procedures.

#### ***D. Removal of Deficient Grades and Repeat of Courses***

A graduate student may repeat a course in which a grade below B (3.0) or a grade of Unsatisfactory was received one time. All credit units attempted and grades received remain part of the permanent record of the student. See Section VI.C.1 above.

#### ***E. Grade Appeals***

A graduate student may initiate a grade appeal only in case of a clerical/procedural error or non-academic circumstances. A student may appeal a grade specifically on the following grounds, set forth in the Academic Senate Grade Appeals Policy ([http://senate.ucmerced.edu/sites/senate.ucmerced.edu/files/documents/UGC/gradeappealspolicy\\_approved\\_dec15\\_2015.pdf](http://senate.ucmerced.edu/sites/senate.ucmerced.edu/files/documents/UGC/gradeappealspolicy_approved_dec15_2015.pdf)).

If there are sufficient and appropriate grounds to appeal a grade, based on the Grade Appeals Policy, a formal appeal petition must be submitted by the sixth week of the term following the one in which the grade in question has been filed. An appeal petition includes a written summary and is filed electronically with the graduate program's Lead Dean (who will communicate with the instructor and other appropriate administrators).

A formal grade appeal petition should include: (1) contact information, (2) course information, (3) background of the appeal including attempts to resolve concerns with instructor and whether the Graduate Group Chair or Lead Dean was contacted, (4) brief description of the appeal, and (5) appendix that includes all related documentation.

If an appeal petition alleges discrimination or arbitrary treatment, an initial assessment of the grounds for the case will be considered by the Lead School Dean. If it is determined that this is potentially a discrimination case, the petition will be reviewed as a Title VI and/or Title IX matter by the appropriate officer(s).

Written notification about findings will be shared with the graduate student and instructor within four weeks of receipt of the formal petition. If the student or instructor requests a reconsideration of the appeal decision, they must respond within one week of this notification to the Provost (or Graduate Dean).

A final appeal to the Graduate Dean may be based only on (1) a violation of due process in the grade appeal process or (2) new and substantial information within one week of the findings. The final decision should occur within the term of the appeal. The decision of the Graduate Dean is final in all appeals regarding grades. Once the Graduate Dean has communicated their decision to the graduate student, the matter is closed to any further review.



If a grade appeal is related to the final term before graduation, submission of an appeal must be made within 30 days after the last day of a student's final term and considered within 30 days after receipt.

## ***F. Examinations***

### **1. Scheduling of Examinations**

Ordinarily, examinations that are required for an advanced degree, including language and comprehensive examinations and qualifying or final examinations are given during an academic session for which the student has registered. However, with the approval of the student's examination committee, such examinations may be given between the end of an academic session for which the student was registered and the beginning of the next academic session.

Qualifying and final examinations for the Ph.D. and Master's degrees are held in person by default. The student and all in-residence committee members are required to attend the examination/defense in person. Committee member(s) not in residence are encouraged to join in person as well, but may participate remotely with approval of the Committee Chair, who is required to be in person. The Committee Chair must notify the Graduate Division at least 14 days before the examination/defense of remote participation for anyone not in residence. Exceptions for students and in-residence committee members must be approved by the Graduate Dean.

### **2. Examination Results**

Examinations may result in either a pass, fail, or partial pass by unanimous consensus of the examination committee. The categories are described below.

- a) A student has passed when the examination committee unanimously votes that the student passed the entire examination with scholarship that is at least acceptable. If agreed unanimously by the committee, the student may be allowed to make minor modifications of written portions prior to submitting the results of the examination.
- b) A student has failed when the examination committee votes unanimously that the student failed the entire examination. The student then has the option of taking a second examination as detailed in Section VI.D.3 below.
- c) A student has partially passed when the examination committee votes unanimously that the student passed some components but failed others. In this instance, the student has the option of taking a second examination on the components failed as detailed in Section VI.D.3.
- d) Within 30 days of the examination date, the chair of the committee must submit to the Graduate Group Chair or his/her designee and the school's graduate support staff the Examination Report conveying information about the student's performance (pass, fail, or partial pass) on each of the components covered during the examination. The graduate support staff will then submit the Examination Report to the Graduate Division.

### **3. Repeat of Critical Examinations**

In accordance with Academic Senate policy, a graduate student shall have the option of taking a second examination in the event of unsatisfactory performance on a critical examination. Included are the Comprehensive Examination, Qualifying Examination, and the Final Examination on the

Ph.D. Dissertation. In keeping with specific Graduate Group Policies and Procedures, the second examination may have a format different from the first, but the substance should remain the same. A student whose performance on the second attempt is also unsatisfactory, or who does not undertake a second examination within a reasonable period of time as established by the examination committee or specified in the Graduate Group Policies and Procedures, is subject to academic disqualification. A third examination may be given only if allowed under Graduate Group Policies and Procedures and with the approval of the examination committee, Graduate Group Chair, and the Graduate Dean.

#### **4. Credit by Examination**

If a student thinks that his or her knowledge of the content of a given course, or knowledge of the appropriate subject matter, is sufficient to be tested by formal examination without enrollment in a course, the student may petition for a limited amount of credit by examination. The following conditions must be met before such a petition can be approved:

- a) The student must be registered for at least four units of upper-division and/or graduate-level work at the time the examination is taken.
- b) The student's overall scholarship must be satisfactory (3.0 or better cumulative grade point average).
- c) The course itself must be one that can be tested by examination. Graduate seminars and research courses cannot be taken for credit by examination.

In cases where the petition for credit by examination is approved, the course instructor retains the prerogative to:

- a) Decide whether s/he will serve as an examiner;
- b) Determine the form such an examination may take; and
- c) Stipulate whether the grade will be reported as Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory or as letter grades in accordance with grading policy for that course.

English is to be the language of instruction and examination for graduate courses at UC Merced, unless the subject matter includes foreign language content. Similarly, examinations that satisfy specific degree requirements, such as qualifying examinations, will be conducted in English, except for those portions of the examination where the subject matter makes a different language appropriate or necessary, such as foreign language literature, linguistics, etc.

The *Credit by Examination Petition* may be obtained from the Registrar or from the Dean of the School offering the course. Approval of any petition for credit by examination must be obtained from the Dean of that School prior to the examination.

#### ***G. Research Integrity and Academic Senate Policy on Academic Honesty***

Students are expected to be familiar with the Research Compliance and Integrity policies and procedures (<http://rci.ucmerced.edu/research-misconduct>). Research misconduct is defined by federal law and university policy as fabrication, falsification and/or plagiarism in proposing or performing research or in reporting research results.

- Fabrication is making up data or results and recording or reporting them.
- Falsification is manipulating research materials, equipment or processes or changing or omitting data or results such that the research is not accurately represented in the research records.
- Plagiarism is the appropriation (use) of another person's ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit.

Honest error, differences of opinion, and authorship/credit disputes do not constitute research misconduct. A finding of research misconduct requires that the accused engaged in conduct that constitutes a significant departure from accepted practices of the relevant research community, and that the misconduct was committed intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly.

In addition, students are expected to be familiar with the Academic Honesty Policy ([https://osrr.ucmerced.edu/sites/osrr.ucmerced.edu/files/documents/academic\\_honesty\\_-\\_800.pdf](https://osrr.ucmerced.edu/sites/osrr.ucmerced.edu/files/documents/academic_honesty_-_800.pdf)). The consequences of failing to uphold this policy are posted on the Student Rights and Responsibilities website (<https://osrr.ucmerced.edu/>). Students who fail to uphold their fundamental academic obligation are subject to consequences that range from lowering a grade to campus-wide sanctions, up to and including dismissal. Examples of conduct that fall under the aegis of the policy on academic honesty include, but are not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, stealing of exams, falsifying the record of one's work, or collusion in such dishonest activities. When faculty suspect academic dishonesty, they must follow due process guidelines and investigate their suspicions promptly and fairly.

## **VI. STANDARDS AND REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAMS**

Students must satisfy the degree requirements outlined in the Graduate Group Policies and Procedures that are in effect at the time they are admitted to a graduate program. If the degree requirements are subsequently revised, the Graduate Group may, where appropriate, give students the option to meet the new requirements. A student who withdraws from a program, or loses student status for other reasons for more than two semesters, will be bound by the degree requirements in effect at the time of readmission unless otherwise stipulated and agreed to in writing by the Graduate Group and approved by the Graduate Dean. A student who defers admission or who changes to another program must meet the requirements in effect at the time of first registration.

### ***A. The Master's Degree***

#### **1. Residency Requirement**

A minimum of two semesters in academic residence is required prior to the award of a master's degree (UC Academic Senate Regulation 686).

#### **2. Curricular Requirements**

The requirements listed herein are the minimum required by the University of California. Most master's degree programs require additional work. Detailed information on specific degree requirements may be found at <http://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/>, and/or individual Graduate Group websites. Students are responsible for fulfilling requirements in effect the year in which they are admitted. Under certain circumstances, the student, with the written approval of the Faculty Advisor and the Graduate Group Chair, may opt to accept the new requirements. In such

cases, the Graduate Group must notify the Graduate Division in writing of the change in order that the student's records correctly identify the new requirements. The following regulations of the Academic Senate, Merced Division, apply to curricular requirements for students in Master's programs.

### ***2.1 Coursework Requirements and Thesis and Examination***

The master's degree is attained by: Plan I, the Thesis option, or Plan II, the Comprehensive Examination or Capstone/Culminating Project option. A program may offer the option of one or both plans with the approval of the Graduate Council. Each of these plans has minimal coursework requirements, but programs may impose additional requirements.

#### ***Plan I (Thesis)***

In addition to the thesis, a minimum of 24 semester units in approved courses is also required, at least 20 of which must be earned in 200-series graduate-level courses exclusive of credit given for thesis research and preparation. A general examination is also required.

#### ***Plan II (Comprehensive Examination or Capstone/Culminating Project)***

In addition to the comprehensive examination or capstone/culminating project, a minimum of 24 semester units in approved courses, at least 20 of which must be from graduate-level courses in the 200 series.

### ***2.2 Thesis (Plan I)***

Under Plan I, a thesis is required. A committee of at least three faculty members recommended by the Graduate Group Chair and appointed by the Graduate Dean shall approve the subject, pass on the content of the thesis, and administer the general examination. Usually one of the committee members directs the work.

#### ***a) Membership***

The thesis committee is comprised of a **minimum of three voting members** of the University of California Academic Senate -- not necessarily the Merced Division. A majority of the committee, but not necessarily all, shall be affiliated with the student's graduate program. The Thesis Committee shall approve the subject of the thesis, pass on the content and administer the general examination. Usually, the Chair of the committee directs the work. Two copies of the approved thesis must be filed with the Thesis and Dissertation Manuscript Advisor.

**Committee Chair:** The Chair of the thesis committee is a senate voting member who shall always be a member of the Graduate Group supervising the master's program.

**General Members:** In addition to three Senate voting members, committee members may be non-Academic Senate faculty on an exception-only basis. The Graduate Dean, on behalf of the Graduate Council, retains sole authority to grant exceptions. All such requests must be submitted in writing by the Graduate Group Chair to the Graduate Dean two weeks prior to the examination to allow a reasonable time for review.

**Oversight Member:** If the Chair, Research/Thesis advisor or other member of the committee

has a financial interest in an outside entity that carries a possibility of a conflict of interest potentially harmful to the graduate student, an Oversight Member must be appointed in addition to the three general members. It is understood that the Oversight Member shall not bear a possible conflict of interest potentially harmful to the graduate student in the discharge of his or her role. See further Section VII. E. (Conflict of Interest). If there do not appear to be any harmful results from the conflict of interest, the Oversight Member shall sign a statement to that effect after each committee meeting and the statement shall be placed in the student's file and a copy forwarded to the Graduate Dean. If the Oversight Member perceives that there is a problem arising from conflict of interest issues, then he/she shall not sign off on the committee deliberation, but shall instead inform the Graduate Dean in writing.

***b) Appointment Procedures***

The qualifications of all committee members must be evaluated and approved by the Graduate Group Chair or designee. When the membership of the proposed committee conforms to Senate policy as defined in this regulation, the Graduate Dean, on behalf of the Graduate Council, may delegate to the Graduate Group the authority to appoint, evaluate, and approve the committee. When the proposed membership deviates from this policy, as in the case of non-faculty members (i.e. Professional Researchers) or faculty members from other universities, or in the case of appointment of an Oversight Member, a request for an exception must be submitted in writing to the Graduate Dean.

***c) Exceptions on Appointment***

**Oversight Member:** The Graduate Dean shall select the Oversight Member from a list of three nominees agreed upon by the student, the faculty research advisor, and the Graduate Group Chair. The Graduate Group Chair shall submit a written request to appoint an Oversight Member to the Graduate Dean no less than two weeks prior to the date of the exam to allow a reasonable time for review. This request should include background information describing the circumstances of the possible conflict. The Graduate Dean will retain sole authority to appoint the Oversight Member. No exceptions to this requirement will be considered.

**General Member:** In addition to three Senate voting members, non-faculty members (i.e. Professional Researchers) and faculty members holding professorial titles from other universities will be considered for general membership on the committee on an exception-only basis with approval of the Graduate Dean.

***d) Responsibilities***

It is the responsibility of the Graduate Group Chair, the Chair of the Candidacy Committee, and the Graduate Division to: (1) to inform the student regarding the policy on Thesis Committees, including full disclosure of issues pertaining to possible conflict of interest that is potentially harmful to graduate students; (2) to provide graduate students with a policy statement on such possible conflict of interest prior to the student designating a research topic, forming a graduate committee, or being employed as a research or teaching assistant, whichever comes first; and (3) to ensure that these Academic Senate policies are followed.

***e) Submission***

The submission of the thesis is the last step in the program leading to the award of an advanced degree. All theses submitted in fulfillment of requirements for advanced degrees at

UC Merced must conform to University regulations with regard to format and method of preparation; see the UC Merced Thesis and Dissertation Manual

### ***1) Deadline for Filing***

The advanced degree manuscript is expected to be submitted by the deadline in the semester in which the degree is to be conferred. The last day of the semester is the deadline for submitting theses that will be awarded at the end of that semester.

### ***2) Public Access***

In accordance with UC and UC Merced policy, all approved thesis/dissertation manuscripts automatically become available for public access and circulation as part of the UC Merced Libraries collections.

## ***2.3 Comprehensive Examination or Capstone/Culminating Project (Plan II)***

A final comprehensive examination or capstone/culminating project, the nature of which is to be determined by the Graduate Group and approved by the Graduate Council, is required of candidates following Plan II. The content of the exam or project represents a capstone requirement that integrates the intellectual substance of the program.

## ***2.4 Advancement to Candidacy***

Except as provided in University of California Senate Regulation 686, no graduate student will be recommended for any degree except upon completing at least one year (two semesters) of academic residence at the University of California, devoted to such a course of study as the Graduate Council concerned regards as a proper year's work, and upon complying with such other regulations as may apply. (See Section V.A, Academic Residence Requirements, for more information on academic residence.)

In the case of the Master's degree, the terms and deadlines for formal advancement to candidacy are outlined in the Graduate Division dates and deadlines website (<https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/current-students/calendar-and-deadlines>). An *Application for Advancement to Candidacy* initiated by the student and approved by the Graduate Group should be submitted to the Graduate Dean before the specified deadline. The application must be accompanied by petitions for any course credits that have not already been approved by the Graduate Dean. Committee membership for master's degree must be included on the advancement to candidacy form. For thesis track (Plan I), the graduate student, graduate advisor, and the Graduate Group chair must complete the Conflict of Interest Statement on the form.

Students must be advanced to candidacy prior to degree conferral. When the student is formally advanced to candidacy, the student and the Graduate Group are notified.

## ***2.5 Final Report for the Master's Degree***

It is the Graduate Group's responsibility to ensure that the course requirements of the graduate program have been met prior to submitting the *Final Report for the Master's Degree* to the Graduate Division. Graduate Groups are encouraged to consult the *Program Summary* applicable to the student's year of admission for each degree program they offer. Substitutions within the graduate student program of study do not need to be approved through the Graduate Dean unless



they affect minimum University and program requirements for the Master's degree.

The *Final Report for the Master's Degree* is also the form used to certify completion of all degree requirements. The final report should be completed as soon as it is possible to certify completion of all requirements. All sections should be completed; if some requirements do not apply, this should be noted in the appropriate space on the form.

If the student has satisfied all requirements except for satisfactory completion of the final semester's course work, the Graduate Group should complete the final report and return it to the Graduate Division prior to receipt of final grade reports. The Graduate Division will verify final grades with the Registrar and consult with the Graduate Group if there is any doubt about conferral of the degree.

### **3. Language Requirements**

Completion of language or alternate skill requirements, if part of the graduate program, may occur any time prior to completion of all other degree requirements unless otherwise specified by the program. It is preferable, however, that such requirements be satisfactorily completed before a student advances to candidacy. The graduate program decides how the examinations are to be given. The Graduate Division should be advised in writing of the type of test taken and the date passed. If an alternate skill requirement approved by the Graduate Council in lieu of a foreign language is satisfied, this should also be indicated in writing.

## ***B. The Doctoral Degree***

### **1. Residency Requirement**

In accordance with University of California Senate Regulation 686, a minimum of four semesters in academic residence is required prior to awarding the Ph.D. Typically, a longer period of study, four to six years, is required for completion of all degree requirements. It is the responsibility of the Graduate Group to inform the student upon admission to the program of the expected advancement to candidacy and completion of degree timeline. If a student does not meet the Graduate Group expected advancement to candidacy, or completion of degree timeline, not including the first two Educational Leave Program (ELP) semesters, they may be subject to Unsatisfactory Status.

### **2. Teaching Requirement**

Most UC Merced Ph.D. programs require all doctoral students to acquire teaching experience at the post-secondary level under faculty supervision. This requirement is usually satisfied by appointment as a Teaching Assistant or Teaching Fellow in undergraduate courses. Refer to Section IV of this document (Academic Appointments and Graduate Student Employment) for definitions, responsibilities, and requirements related to teaching titles. Other means of satisfying this requirement must be approved by the Graduate Dean and, as this is part of their scholarly preparation and may affect other aspects of their education, by Graduate Council.

### **3. Language Requirements**

Completion of language or alternate skill requirements, if part of the graduate program, may occur any time prior to completion of all other degree requirements unless otherwise specified by the program. It is preferable, however, that such requirements be satisfactorily completed before a

student advances to candidacy. The graduate program decides how the examinations are to be given. The Graduate Division should be advised in writing of the type of test taken and the date passed. If an alternate skill requirement approved by the Graduate Council in lieu of a foreign language is satisfied, this should also be indicated in writing.

#### **4. Waiver of Course Work**

Courses taken toward a graduate degree at another institution cannot be transferred for credit toward a Ph.D. at UC Merced. However, a course requirement may be waived if a similar course was taken at another institution and the instructor and Graduate Group Chair determine that the student exhibits adequate knowledge and understanding of the relevant material. The *General Petition* form should be used for all requests for waivers of course work. To obtain a waiver, the Graduate Group should submit a full description of the course including a syllabus and a copy of the student's transcripts along with the *Petition* to the Graduate Division for review and approval.

#### **5. Advancement to Candidacy**

Graduate students are admitted to candidacy after completion of all candidacy requirements and approval of a formal application by the Graduate Division. A student advances to candidacy for the Ph.D. upon successfully demonstrating a high level of scholarship at the Ph.D. level, and upon completing all preparatory work and demonstrating readiness to proceed to the dissertation phase.

##### **5.1 Advancing to Candidacy**

Graduate students are nominated for admission to candidacy for the Ph.D. degree by their Graduate Group. Students are admitted to candidacy if they pass by unanimous vote a candidacy examination administered by a Candidacy Committee and meet all other conditions (such as specific course requirements) set by the Graduate Group. When the membership of the proposed Candidacy Committee conforms to the guidelines set forth in this Handbook (see next section), the Graduate Dean may delegate to the Graduate Group the authority both to evaluate and to approve the committee. The Graduate Dean retains sole authority to grant exceptions to this policy, and to appoint a nominee as Oversight Member in those cases where the possibility of a conflict of interest that is potentially harmful to the graduate student exists. Requests for approval of exceptions must be submitted in writing by the Graduate Group Chair to the Graduate Dean at least two weeks prior to the scheduled exam to allow a reasonable time for review.

The Graduate Group must also inform students regarding the policy on candidacy committees including policy related to any possible conflict of interest (personal or financial) that is potentially harmful to graduate students. It is the responsibility of the Chair of the Graduate Group and the Chair of the Candidacy Committee to ensure that these Academic Senate policies, as described in the Faculty Code of Conduct (<http://www.ucop.edu/academic-personnel-programs/files/apm/apm-015.pdf>), are followed. Should these Senate policies not be followed, the student, at the discretion of the Graduate Dean, may be required to retake the Advancement Exam.

Any non-resident student who continues to be enrolled or who re-enrolls more than three years after advancing to candidacy will be charged the full Non-Resident Resident Supplemental Tuition that is in effect at that time. This fee may be paid by the Graduate Group, the PI on a grant, or the student.

## ***5.2 Candidacy Committee***

The Candidacy Committee is comprised of a **minimum of three voting members** of the University of California Academic Senate -- not necessarily the Merced Division. A majority of the committee, but not necessarily all, shall be affiliated with the student's graduate program.

### ***a) Membership***

**Committee Chair:** The Chair of the candidacy committee is a senate voting member who shall always be a member of the Graduate Group supervising the doctoral program.

**General Members:** At least one member in addition to the Chair must be a member of the student's Graduate Group. No exceptions to the requirement that a majority of voting members hold appointments in the student's Graduate Group will be considered. In addition to three senate voting members, committee members may be non-Academic Senate faculty on an exception-only basis. The Graduate Dean, on behalf of the Graduate Council, retains sole authority to grant exceptions. All such requests must be submitted in writing by the Graduate Group Chair to the Graduate Dean two weeks prior to the examination to allow a reasonable time for review.

**The Oversight Member:** If the Chair, Research/Thesis advisor or other member of the committee has a financial interest in an outside entity that carries a possibility of a conflict of interest potentially harmful to the graduate student, an Oversight Member must be appointed in addition to the three general members. It is understood that the Oversight Member shall not bear a possible conflict of interest potentially harmful to the graduate student in the discharge of his or her role. See further Section VII. E. (Conflict of Interest). If there do not appear to be any harmful results from the conflict of interest, the Oversight Member shall sign a statement to that effect after each committee meeting and the statement shall be placed in the student's file and a copy forwarded to the Graduate Dean. If the Oversight Member perceives that there is a problem arising from conflict of interest issues, then he/she shall not sign off on the committee deliberation, but shall instead inform the Graduate Dean in writing.

### ***b) Appointment Procedures***

The qualifications of all committee members must be evaluated and approved by the Graduate Group Chair or designee. When the membership of the proposed committee conforms to Senate policy as defined in this regulation, the Graduate Dean, on behalf of the Graduate Council, may delegate to the Graduate Group Chair the authority to appoint, evaluate and approve the committee. When the proposed membership deviates from this policy, as in the case of non-faculty members (i.e. Professional Researcher) or faculty members from other universities, or when appointment of an Oversight Member is perceived to be necessary, a request for an exception or nomination must be submitted in writing to the Graduate Dean (see below).

Non-faculty members (i.e. Professional Researchers) or faculty holding professorial titles at other Universities will be considered on an exception-only basis. The Graduate Dean retains sole authority to grant these exceptions, which must be submitted in writing by the Chair of the Graduate Group at least two weeks prior to the scheduled exam, and must be accompanied by a curriculum vitae of the individual for whom the exception is being requested.

**c) *Duties and Responsibilities***

The Candidacy Committee is charged with determining the fitness of the student to proceed with the doctoral dissertation through a formal Qualifying Examination. The examination should evaluate both general preparedness in the discipline, and specific competence to pursue the proposed dissertation topic. In its deliberation, the Committee ordinarily will review the student's academic record, preliminary examinations and evaluations by other faculty. The Committee may conduct any other examination it deems appropriate. The Committee ordinarily will review an outline of the proposed dissertation project, and will determine by oral examination the student's competence in that area. Following its formal appointment, the Committee is free to adopt whatever procedures it deems appropriate to conduct the Qualifying Examination for candidacy, subject to the rules of the program and those specified below:

- Administration of the Candidacy Examination must conform to the policies established by the Graduate Council.
- The student must be given adequate notice of the content, form and time of the examination.
- The Committee must meet to decide upon the procedures to be followed, and the student given an opportunity to comment upon the selected procedures.

Before voting upon its recommendation for or against candidacy, the Committee, as a whole, shall meet with the student, and any member of the Committee will have the right to pose appropriate questions to the student.

**d) *Conduct of the Exam and Voting Procedures***

Although the formal Qualifying Examination for candidacy ordinarily is conducted in a single day, the Committee may meet intermittently over a longer period, and may decide to reexamine the student on one or more topics after a specified interval. When the Committee meets to conduct the oral Qualifying Examination, it must report to the Graduate Council via the Graduate Dean within 30 days. If the Committee decides to reexamine the student at a later date or does not pass the student for any reason, this must be reported to the Graduate Dean. The final vote and recommendation of the Committee must be unanimous and unequivocal.

The Committee's discussion and vote is held in private. Upon completion of the Committee's deliberations and vote and before the end of the examination period, the Committee will communicate their decision and discussion points with the student.

When, by unanimous vote, the Committee decides the student is qualified for the dissertation phase, it shall recommend advancement to candidacy to the Graduate Council via the Graduate Dean.

**e) *Procedure for Validating and Recording Results***

Upon completion of the Qualifying Examination and all other Graduate Group requirements for Advancement to Candidacy, the results should be submitted to the Graduate Division on the *Qualifying Examination Report* form. The *Qualifying Examination Report* must be signed by all committee members at the time the candidacy examination is concluded and submitted even if the student failed the examination. Prior to convening a student committee for advancement to candidacy exam, the Faculty Advisor, the Graduate Group Chair, and the

graduate student must sign the *Statement on Conflict of Interest* form that is included in the *Advancement to Candidacy for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy* form. If the unanimous recommendation of the Committee is favorable, the student must pay the current Advancement to Candidacy fee to the campus Cashier's Office, which will validate the form. The student must then submit the *Advancement to Candidacy* form to the Graduate Division. The candidate and graduate program will be notified of formal advancement and the appointment of a Doctoral Committee. Advancement to Candidacy begins with the first academic term following completion of all requirements (including submission of all forms).

## 6. Lapse of Candidacy

Candidacy for the Ph.D. will lapse automatically if the student loses graduate standing by academic disqualification or failure to comply with the University policy on continuous registration. A readmitted student who was a candidate for the Ph.D. must again advance to candidacy, pay the current Advancement to Candidacy fee, and thereafter enroll as a candidate for at least one academic semester before the Ph.D. will be conferred.

## 7. The Doctoral Committee

### 7.1 Dissertation

The Doctoral Committee shall supervise the preparation and completion of the dissertation and the final examination. The Doctoral Committee is comprised of a **minimum of three voting members** of the University of California Academic Senate -- not necessarily the Merced Division. A majority of the committee, but not necessarily all, shall be affiliated with the student's graduate program.

### 7.2 Membership

The Doctoral Committee is nominated by the Candidacy Committee with the concurrence of the candidate, the Doctoral Committee Chair, and the Graduate Group Chair or designee, on the *Ph.D.* Form.

- a) Committee Chair: The Chair of the Doctoral Committee is a senate voting member who shall always be a member of the Graduate Group supervising the doctoral program.
- b) General Members: At least one member in addition to the Chair must be a member of the student's Graduate Group. No exceptions to the requirement that a majority of voting members hold appointments in the student's Graduate Group will be considered. In addition to three senate voting members, committee members may be non-Academic Senate faculty on an exception-only basis. The Graduate Dean, on behalf of the Graduate Council, retains sole authority to grant exceptions. All such requests must be submitted in writing by the Graduate Group Chair to the Graduate Dean two weeks prior to the examination to allow a reasonable time for review.
- c) The Oversight Member: If the Chair, Research/Thesis advisor or other member of the committee has a financial interest in an outside entity that carries a possibility of a conflict of interest potentially harmful to the graduate student, an Oversight Member must be appointed in addition to the three general members. It is understood that the Oversight Member shall not bear a possible conflict of interest potentially harmful to the graduate student in the discharge

of his or her role. See further Section VII. E. (Conflict of Interest). If there do not appear to be any harmful results from the conflict of interest, the Oversight Member shall sign a statement to that effect after each committee meeting and the statement shall be placed in the student's file and a copy forwarded to the Graduate Dean. If the Oversight Member perceives that there is a problem arising from conflict of interest issues, then he/she shall not sign off on the committee deliberation, but shall instead inform the Graduate Dean in writing.

### ***7.3 Appointment Procedures***

The qualifications of all committee members must be evaluated and approved by the Graduate Group Chair or designee. When the membership of the proposed committee conforms to Senate policy as defined in this regulation, the Graduate Dean, on behalf of the Graduate Council, may delegate to the Graduate Group the authority to appoint, evaluate and approve the members of the Doctoral Committee. When the proposed membership deviates from this policy, as in the case of non-faculty members (i.e. Professional Researcher) or faculty members from other universities, or when appointment of an Oversight Member is perceived to be necessary, a request for an exception or nomination must be submitted in writing to the Graduate Dean (see below).

### ***7.4 Exceptions***

- a) General Members: Non-faculty members (i.e. Professional Researchers) or faculty holding professorial titles at other Universities will be considered on an exception-only basis. The Graduate Dean retains sole authority to grant these exceptions, which must be submitted in writing by the Chair of the Graduate Group at least two weeks prior to the scheduled exam, and must be accompanied by a curriculum vitae of the individual for whom the exception is being requested.
- b) Oversight Member: In those cases where a possible conflict of interest exists as described above, the Graduate Dean shall select the Oversight Member from a list of three nominees agreed upon by the student, the faculty research advisor and the Graduate Group representative. If these individuals cannot agree on three nominees, the Graduate Group representative (either the graduate advisor or the chair if the advisor is conflicted) shall select the nominees. The Graduate Group representative shall submit the request to appoint an Oversight Member in writing to the Graduate Dean no less than two weeks prior to the date of the exam to allow a reasonable time for review. This request should include background information describing the circumstances of the possible conflict. The Graduate Dean will retain sole authority to appoint the Oversight Member. No exceptions to this requirement will be considered.

### ***7.5 Duties and Responsibilities***

It is the responsibility of the Graduate Group Chair and the Chair of the Doctoral Committee to: 1) inform the student regarding the policy on Doctoral Committees, including full disclosure of issues pertaining to the possibility of conflict of interest potentially harmful to the student; 2) provide graduate students with a policy statement on conflict of interest prior to the student designating a research topic, forming a graduate committee, or being employed as a research or teaching assistant, whichever comes first; and 3) ensure that the Academic Senate policies are adhered to.



## 8. Final Examination

If a final examination is required by the graduate program, the Doctoral Committee supervises that examination, the focus of which is the content of the doctoral dissertation. Ordinarily, the final examination will be given just prior to the completion of the dissertation and while the student is in residence during a regular academic session. Administration of the final examination is subject to the policies of the Graduate Council governing critical examinations.

### 8.1 Ph.D. Form: Report on Final Examination

- a) Upon completion of the final examination and approval of the dissertation, the Doctoral Committee recommends the conferral of the Ph.D. by submitting the *Report on Final Examination* to the Graduate Division. The Committee recommendation must be unanimous.
- b) If the vote of the Doctoral Committee is favorable pending changes or unfavorable, an explanation to the student is required and the Graduate Division must be notified.

## 9. Dissertation

Submitting the dissertation is the last step of the program leading to the award of an advanced degree. All dissertations submitted in fulfillment of requirements for advanced degrees at UC Merced must conform to certain University regulations and specifications with regard to format and method of preparation. See the *UC Merced Thesis and Dissertation Manual* for formatting requirements and filing instructions ([https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/sites/graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/files/documents/PDFs/ucm\\_thesis\\_dissertation\\_manual.pdf](https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/sites/graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/files/documents/PDFs/ucm_thesis_dissertation_manual.pdf)). The Doctoral Committee certifies that the completed dissertation is satisfactory through the signatures of all Committee members on the signature page of the completed dissertation.

### 9.1 Deadline for Filing

The advanced degree manuscript is expected to be submitted by the deadline in the semester in which the degree is to be conferred. The end of the semester is the deadline for submitting dissertations during each semester.

### 9.2 Public Access

In accordance with UC and UC Merced policy, all approved thesis/dissertation manuscripts automatically become available for public access and circulation as part of UC Merced's Library Collections, although they may be embargoed for a specified period of time (<http://libguides.ucmerced.edu/c.php?g=15827&p=1071526>).

## C. Language Policy for Theses/Dissertations

As allowed under Graduate Group policies and procedures, students must seek permission to write their thesis/dissertation in a language other than English. To do so, within 30 calendar days after advancement to candidacy, the candidate must submit a letter to the Graduate Dean, approved by the thesis/dissertation chair, committee, and Graduate Group Chair. All members of the candidate's thesis/dissertation committee must have a reading knowledge of the language presented in the thesis/dissertation. There must be legitimate reasons for substituting English with a foreign language such as subject matter, special primary audience, publication arrangements, academic position in a foreign country, historical or literary value, or principal language(s) used in the documents to be analyzed and interpreted. Inability to write in English is

not a valid reason. If the thesis or dissertation is approved to be written in a foreign language, the candidate must submit two abstracts. One must be in English; the other must be written in the language of the thesis or dissertation. Moreover, the thesis/dissertation defense will be conducted in English, except as determined by subject matter. See the UC Merced Thesis and Dissertation Manual for information about the preparation of manuscripts ([https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/sites/graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/files/documents/PDFs/ucm\\_thesis\\_dissertation\\_manual.pdf](https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/sites/graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/files/documents/PDFs/ucm_thesis_dissertation_manual.pdf)).

## ***D. Conflict of Interest***

### **1. Definition**

For the purposes of this document the term "conflict of interest" refers to instances where faculty may have a financial conflict of interest as defined in APM 025 (<http://www.ucop.edu/academic-personnel-programs/files/apm/apm-025-07-01.pdf>). Information on this and other types of conflicts of interest or on student grievance procedures are described in the University of California publication entitled Policies Applying to Campus Activities, Organizations, and Students (<http://policy.ucop.edu/doc/2710521/PACAOS-14>).

### **2. Objective**

The policy on financial conflict of interest establishes mechanisms to protect the academic interests of a graduate student in the event that a faculty mentor, thesis or dissertation advisor, or other members on the committee may have a financial interest relating to a project on which the student is working, whether sponsored or unsponsored. The intent is to apply the policy only to those situations in which a financial conflict of interest is perceived to be potentially harmful to the academic interests of the student. The graduate student, the faculty mentor/advisor, or a Graduate Group representative (either the graduate advisor or chair) may initiate the procedures to address the perceived conflict of interest. The procedures must also be considered in conjunction with the UC Merced Academic Senate Regulations governing graduate student committees. The details of implementation for student committees can be found in this Section under *F. The Master's Degree: Standards and Requirements*, *H. The Doctoral Degree: Standards and Requirements*.

### **3. Summary of Mechanism**

When a graduate student, the Faculty Advisor, or Lead School Dean identifies a conflict of interest, that person must notify the Graduate Group Chair and the Graduate Dean in writing. The Graduate Group Chair will then examine the potential impact upon the student. If there is a potential for harm to the student, then an additional faculty member, the Oversight Member, will be appointed by the Graduate Dean to the student's advisory and/or master's/doctoral committee to insure the faculty conflict does not impact upon the academic interests of the student. If the Oversight Member perceives an academic problem related to the conflict of interest that cannot be resolved at the Graduate Group level, then the matter will be turned over to the Graduate Dean for resolution.

### **4. Responsibilities**

#### ***4.1 The Graduate Group***

- a) The Graduate Group is responsible for insuring that graduate students are properly notified

about the nature and risks of faculty conflicts of interest as well as the University definition and policy regarding such conflicts. The Graduate Group is encouraged to communicate during the student's first semester as a graduate student, in a format of the Group's choosing, the UC Merced policy on conflict of interest matters as well as the procedures designed to protect the academic interests of the student. The Graduate Group is also responsible for notifying the graduate students of the identity of a designated resource person who is available to advise students in circumstances in which there is a perceived or potential faculty conflict of interest. The designated resource person typically will be the Graduate Group Chair, unless this person is the conflicted faculty member. In such cases, another Graduate Group member will be appointed by the Graduate Dean to serve as the designated resource person. In situations in which the Graduate Dean is the student's conflicted Faculty Advisor, a designated resource person chosen by the Lead Dean associated with the Graduate Group shall handle all matters.

- b) The Graduate Group is responsible for ensuring that faculty members have a written copy of the APM-028 section on conflict of interest ([www.ucop.edu/acadadv/acadpers/apm/welcome.html](http://www.ucop.edu/acadadv/acadpers/apm/welcome.html)) and other related policies and guidelines.

#### ***4.2 Faculty Advisor***

A Faculty Advisor is a member of the student's Graduate Group who provides primary guidance to a graduate student on matters of research, academic coursework requirements and funding. Each faculty member serving as a mentor or thesis or dissertation advisor to a graduate student is personally responsible for disclosing any conflict of interest that might in any way be pertinent to the research conducted by the student. In doing so, the faculty member should use criteria as outlined in APM-028, regardless of whether the company/entity is sponsoring research at UC Merced. The faculty member is also responsible for notifying the student, and the designated resource person of the Graduate Group, of his or her conflict of interest in a timely manner. Timely manner means that the faculty member should notify the Graduate Group representative and the student at the time that the student is considering a thesis or dissertation topic, forming a graduate committee, or being employed as a GSR or TA, whichever comes first.

#### ***4.3 The Graduate Division and the Office of Research***

The Graduate Division and the Office of Research shall provide written information on conflict of interest policies and procedures to all Graduate Groups and students. In it, the information should include: (1) the definition of conflict of interest as it pertains to graduate education; (2) describe the nature of potential conflicts of interest and provide brief examples; (3) describe the possible harmful effects on the academic interests of the graduate students, and (4) provide a list of University resources that can be consulted. The statement should also encourage students to first attempt to resolve their concerns informally within the Graduate Group, beginning with a designated resource person (chosen by the Graduate Group), and secondarily, if necessary, to initiate the formal procedures detailed herein. The statement is included in appropriate publications, including this Handbook and the Advancement to Candidacy forms. At any time, the student can also seek the advice of one of the identified campus-wide resource persons, including the Vice Chancellor of Research, the Graduate Dean, or their delegates.

### **5. Implementation**

A conflict of interest issue may be raised at any time, at the level of the Graduate Group, by the

graduate student, Faculty Advisor, Lead School Dean, or a Graduate Group representative.

- a) The conflict of interest issue shall be reviewed by, and openly discussed among, the relevant parties to determine if the conflict has the potential to negatively impact the academic interests of the student.
- b) If the conflict of interest poses minimal risk of harm to the academic interests of the student, then the designated resource person in the Graduate Group shall write a brief statement to that effect, including a summary of the situation and the reasons for the decision. If there is mutual agreement with the statement, the student and conflicted faculty member shall co-sign the statement. The signed statement shall then be deposited in the student's file and a copy forwarded to the Graduate Division. Copies should also be provided to the co-signers. Should any party become aware of new information impacting the academic interests of the student, the decision that the faculty conflict of interest does not appear to have a negative impact on the student can be reviewed and overturned. If, however, either the student or the conflicted faculty member does not agree with the statement after suitable revisions have been attempted by the designated resource person, then the conflict of interest matter should be referred promptly to the Graduate Dean for final resolution, which may include the designation of an Oversight Member on the student's doctoral or master's committee.
- c) If the conflict of interest issue is determined to include a component that may be harmful to the student, then the designated resource person in the Graduate Group shall notify the Graduate Dean in writing and request that the Dean appoint an Oversight Member to the student's research advisory and/or master's/doctoral committee. The Oversight Member shall not be implicated in any way with the conflict of interest issue, but if at all possible, should be familiar with the student's research interest.

The Graduate Dean shall select the Oversight Member from a list of three nominees agreed upon by the student, the faculty research advisor, and the Graduate Group representative. If these individuals cannot agree on three nominees, the Graduate Group representative (either the graduate advisor or the Graduate Group chair if the advisor is conflicted) will select the nominees. The Graduate Group representative shall submit a written request to appoint an Oversight Member to the Graduate Dean no less than two weeks prior to the date of the exam to allow a reasonable time for review. This request should include background information describing the circumstances of the possible conflict. The Graduate Dean will retain sole authority to appoint the Oversight Member. No exceptions to this requirement will be considered.

## **6. Conflict of Interest Wherein a Student is Conflicted**

It is possible there may be instances where a student may be the conflicted party. These would include instances involving a student who holds a financial interest in an outside entity that may have an interest in a project on which the student is or may be working toward a graduate degree. In such cases it is important to consult with the Vice Chancellor for Research or the Graduate Dean.

### ***E. Transfer of Credit***

The *General Petition* form may be used for purposes of requesting transfer of credit by currently enrolled students only.

## 1. Policy

Transfers of credit toward Master's degree requirements are governed by University regulation and policy summarized in the *UC Merced General Catalog* and may also be found on the website of the UC Senate Manual By-Laws and Regulations (<http://senate.ucmerced.edu/bylaws-and-regulations>).

- a) Petitions for transfer credit will be considered only when the work is necessary to fulfill degree requirements.
- b) If official transcripts of academic work are not already in the student's file, they must be submitted as part of any petition for transfer credit or course substitution of degree requirements.
- c) No petition for transfer credit is needed for work completed as a regular graduate student in UC Merced regular academic sessions, at other campuses through Intercampus Exchange, or in UC Merced Summer Sessions, including Summer Sessions prior to first registration semester at UC Merced following formal admission to a graduate program.

## 2. Procedures

- a) Petitions for transfer of credit should be submitted within the first semester after enrollment as a UC Merced graduate student or completion of the academic work for which transfer credit is requested. All petitions for transfer credit must be supported by official transcripts of the work completed, and sent directly to the Graduate Division by the issuing institution.
- b) Up to one-half the total units required earned during regular academic semesters at another graduate division of the University of California may be transferred.
- c) Up to one-fifth the total units required may be transferred from any one or a combination of the following: University of California Extension, another institution, or Summer Sessions at another UC campus.
- d) Quarter units will be transferred at 0.67 times the semester unit value.
- e) In all cases, transfer credit may be allowed only for graduate-level work taken after awarding of the Bachelor's degree or when taken as an undergraduate in excess of both the unit and major requirements for the Bachelor's degree. No transfer of credit will be accepted for work applied toward the requirements of another graduate degree.
- f) No transfer credit will be allowed for any course in which a grade below B or the equivalent is assigned.
- g) No transfer credit may be given for work completed while currently enrolled, or on an Educational Leave Program (ELP), without prior written approval of the Graduate Group Chair and the Graduate Dean.
- h) Under no circumstances will grade credits be transferred.
- i) Courses that are transferred do not count toward the required number of units in 200-series courses.

## ***F. Change of Degree Title/Program/ Level/or Graduate Group***

### **1. Change of Degree Level Within a Graduate Group (Master's to Ph.D.)**

A student who was admitted to the Master's degree program may be considered by the Graduate Group for subsequent admission to Ph.D. status. The committee may require the student to submit new letters of recommendation, a revised statement of purpose, or other appropriate information. The process is internal to that Graduate Group until a decision is made. The Chair of the Graduate Group offering the degree must approve the *Change of Degree* form. The form must be submitted

to the Graduate Division along with the Graduate Group's decision. If the Graduate Group accepts the student for doctoral studies, the Graduate Dean has the authority to approve and formally recognize the change to doctoral status. Only at that time will the student be eligible to register as a doctoral student. International students may have additional visa sponsorship requirements if they change from one degree level to another, and should check with the Office of International Affairs.

## **2. Change of Degree Level Within a Graduate Group (Ph.D. to Master's)**

A student admitted for the Ph.D. degree, who, in the judgment of the unit's graduate affairs committee should not continue past the master's degree, must be notified in writing by the Graduate Group Chair of the program offering the degree. A copy of the letter must be sent to the Graduate Dean. Alternately, the student may choose to leave the program with a master's degree only. In such cases, it is the responsibility of the Graduate Group to notify the Graduate Division via the *Change of Degree* form so the student's record may be updated to reflect the student's degree status. This notice must include the student's written permission to have his/her degree objective changed officially from doctorate to master's.

## **3. Change of Graduate Group**

A current student who wishes to transfer to a graduate program offered by a different Graduate Group should first consult with the Graduate Group Chair of the desired program. A formal request for such a change must be submitted to the Graduate Dean using the *Change of Degree and Major* form. The student must indicate therein the most recent semester of enrollment at UC Merced. The Graduate Division may request the current custodian of the student's academic records to forward copies of certain documents to the Graduate Group the student wishes to enter. The receiving unit may require the student to submit additional information, such as current letters of recommendation, as necessary and appropriate. Students will receive formal notification by the Graduate Division of the outcome.

However, if the student seeks an advanced degree from the initial program in addition to changing Graduate Groups, all requirements for that degree must be completed and a new graduate admissions online application must be submitted to the Graduate Division.

If there is a lapse of student status, the Application for Readmission and payment of the nonrefundable application fee are required. Refer to Section II.D. for additional information regarding readmission process.

# ***G. Degree Conferral***

## **1. Registration Requirements**

Master's and doctoral degrees are conferred at the end of the academic semester in which all requirements have been satisfied, subject to the final approval of the Graduate Dean. Graduate students must be registered for the semester in which all degree requirements are completed and the degree is to be conferred. Students who do not meet the submission deadline (Academic Year Important Dates and Deadlines calendar, <http://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/current-students/calendar-and-deadlines>), may be eligible to pay a Filing Fee in lieu of registration under certain circumstances.



## **2. Certification of Degree Award**

The Graduate Division notifies students by mail of formal degree conferral at the end of the semester in which the degree is conferred. Once all degree requirements are completed, the student may submit a *Request for Certification of Completion* form. A formal letter bearing the Graduate Dean's signature and University Seal is the equivalent of the diploma or the official academic transcript posting for employment and career advancement purposes. The student may request one copy for personal use, or for direct transmission to another educational institution or employer. While there is no charge for this service, only one official letter is provided for each degree.

## ***H. Graduation and Diploma Information***

### **1. Advancement to Candidacy Requirement**

Students must be advanced to candidacy prior to degree conferral. A student who expects to complete all requirements for an advanced degree in a given semester must be advanced to candidacy for that degree according to the deadlines outlined in the Graduate Division dates and deadlines website (<https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/current-students/calendar-and-deadlines>).

### **2. Diploma and Commencement Form**

Students who expect to graduate must submit the *Graduate Student Graduation Application* form and payment to the Registrar's Office. All other final degree paperwork must be submitted to the Graduate Division. Please consult the Graduate Division website for deadlines regarding filing of master's and doctoral degree paperwork.

### **3. Commencement**

After submitting the *Graduate Student Graduation Application* form, students who wish to participate in the Spring commencement ceremony must go to the Commencement website for information on eligibility requirements, regalia, hooding, tickets and to ensure their name will be included in the program (<http://commencement.ucmerced.edu/>).

## ***I. Conflict Resolution***

### **1. Managing Professional Relationships Between Graduate Students and Faculty**

Healthy professional relationships are essential to the research and educational missions of UC Merced. Professional relationships between faculty mentors and graduate students are especially important to the health and well-being of our graduate community, but the norms and expectations of faculty/graduate student relationships are complex in terms of their inherent power dynamic, and their variability over time and across different contexts and disciplines. Graduate students may enter advising/mentorship relationships with one or more faculty members at any given time, and they may also enter into an employee/supervisor relationship with a faculty instructor or Principal Investigator. The supervisor may or may not be an advisor/mentor to the graduate student, and the faculty playing one or both of these roles are likely to change over time.

In all cases, establishing healthy faculty/grad relationships is critical to effective mentorship and scholarship, and healthy relationships promote the well-being and careers of all parties concerned.

Often the most important and intensive faculty/grad relationship is between the Ph.D. advisor and advisee, so it is especially important to foster and maintain the health of these professional relationships.

The following guidelines and resources are intended for faculty/grad relationships in general and advisor/advisee relationships in particular:

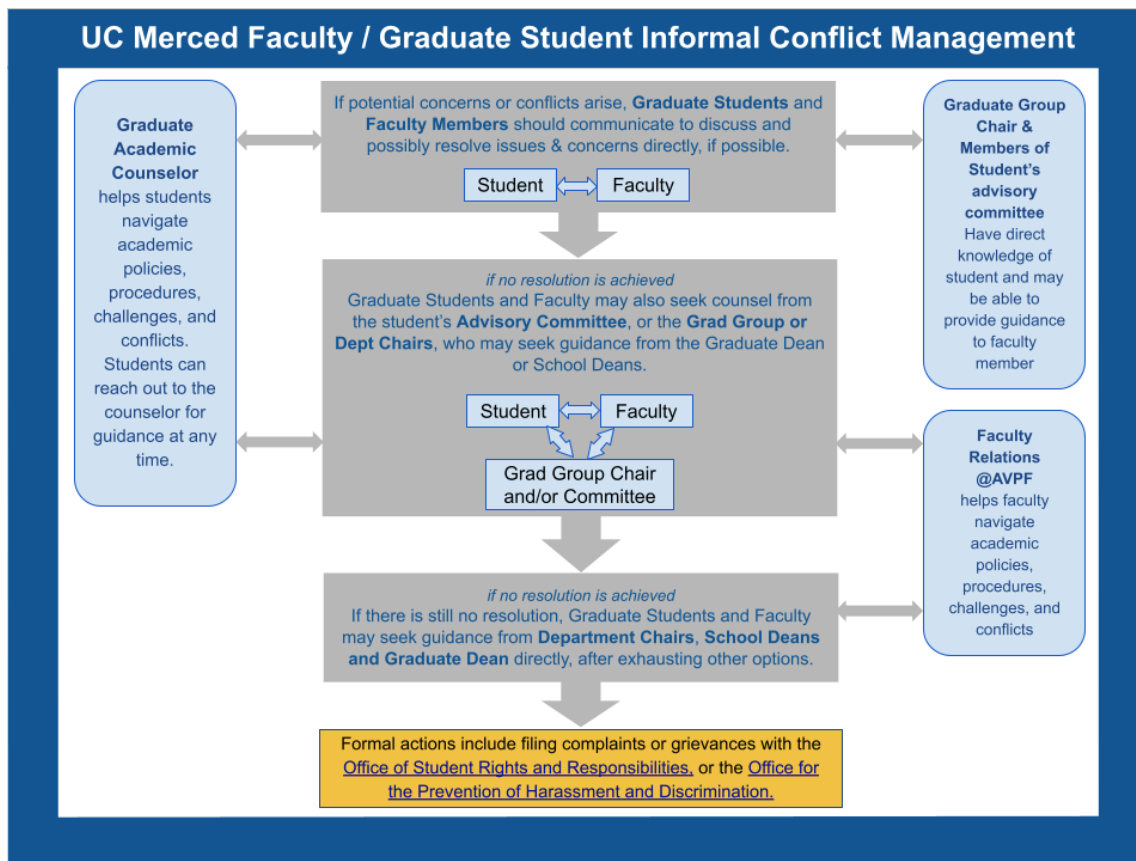
- Graduate groups and their faculty should set clear expectations and boundaries for graduate students in all settings, including the classroom, the lab, the research group, and 1:1 meetings. Consistent expectations and norms help to develop transparency and trust in graduate groups and faculty research groups. Normative expectations will vary across disciplines, so they may be codified in the policies and procedures of individual graduate groups as appropriate.
- Advisors and advisees may find it helpful to create an [Individual Development Plan \(IDP\)](#) for each graduate student to help clarify expectations, goals, and timelines for scholarly activities and advancing through the graduate program.
- Faculty and graduate students should communicate with each other clearly and regularly about academic progress and milestones. It is good practice to document any agreements about activities and timelines, and share documentation as needed. For example, a graduate student may send an email to their advisor after a meeting to summarize the discussion and confirm any action items, including who is responsible for what and when.
- Faculty and graduate students should review the [UC Merced Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities](#), [Graduate Mentorship Guidelines](#), and [Principles of Community](#) to understand overall norms for healthy professional relationships in our graduate community. Graduate advisors and advisees may consider co-signing a copy of the Rights and Responsibilities document at the start of their relationship to mutually recognize the campus norms and ideals.
- Graduate students often benefit from networking with a team of mentors, which includes the qualifying exam and dissertation committees, but may also include other advisory committees, research teams, and scholarly affiliations. The primary advisor is often one of the core members of these teams, but teams may also include more senior graduate students, postdoctoral researchers, and faculty collaborators. A team of mentors can help support and enrich professional relationships between faculty and graduate students.
- Mentorship Training workshops (offered on campus or elsewhere) are recommended for faculty members, postdocs, and graduate students to learn best practices in mentorship.

Success for faculty members is generally aligned with success for graduate students, and vice versa. Faculty benefit when mentorship leads to productive graduate students who go on to successful careers, and graduate students benefit from mentorship by successful faculty members who can help students network with research and professional communities. More broadly speaking, the department, university, and research community all benefit when faculty and graduate students succeed together in producing scholarship, advancing their field and contributing to the knowledge workforce.

Conversely, it can be detrimental to everyone when problems arise in professional relationships between faculty and graduate students. Conflicts can grow to have adverse effects on the well-being and careers of faculty and graduate students alike, and problems in professional relationships can spread to affect other members of the graduate community. Therefore it is critical to recognize when problems arise and to address them as needed. Conflicts between advisors and advisees can be especially stressful because of the importance of these relationships in terms of academic progress and career advancement.

## 2. Informal Management of Conflicts Between Faculty and Graduate Students

Problems in professional relationships between faculty and graduate students can usually be resolved when they are addressed before growing to become harmful to research, education, and professional development. Therefore, it is important to address problems up front when possible, without exacerbation or unnecessary escalation. The conflict management diagram below was created to help faculty and graduate students navigate academic and related problems that may arise. The overarching principle is to address conflicts as locally and informally as possible before they require intervention, and possibly grow beyond repair. In the case of advisors and advisees, problems may lead to dissolution of the professional relationship. Either party has the right to terminate the relationship, but the decision can be difficult because the advisor and advisee may have invested years of training, research, scholarship, and professional development. It can be costly to end an advisor/advisee relationship if the investment is cut short before fully maturing in terms of educational attainment, research productivity, and career development. Nevertheless, sometimes it is best to end the relationship after careful consideration.



The conflict management diagram illustrates recommended steps for faculty and graduate students to consider when conflicts arise. The typical steps to follow are shown from top to bottom. Students and faculty may enter the conflict management process at different points, and may exit at any time when a resolution is achieved. They may also skip steps or circle back for various reasons, but the normative approach is to follow the guidelines from top to bottom, seeking resolution at each step and avoiding unnecessary escalation.

The steps are summarized as follows:

1. As in other kinds of professional relationships, faculty and graduate students should communicate their concerns to each other respectfully, without threat of retaliation or other unprofessional behaviors. When possible, the parties should engage in good faith efforts to resolve problems while maintaining goodwill and continuing academic progress. That said, sometimes it is in the best interest of one or both parties to part ways, which may mean dissolving an advisor-advisee relationship as amicably and productively as possible.
2. Sometimes there are concerns or fears that prohibit individuals from addressing conflicts directly, or there is need for guidance on options, norms, or how to communicate concerns. Graduate students and faculty can seek guidance from the Graduate Academic Counselor or Faculty Relations in the AVFP Office, who keep their counsel private when requested and appropriate. They may also or instead seek guidance from the student's advisory committee members. The Counselor and Faculty Relations representative are both trained to help navigate and mediate discussions regarding conflicts in professional relationships among faculty and graduate students (also see [here](#) for national guidelines and services). With permission of the student or faculty member, they may also consult with the Graduate Group and Department Chairs to better understand the constraints, opportunities, and resources that may be available.

In the case of advisor-advisee conflicts, if there is no other viable solution, the preferred course of action may be to dissolve the relationship. In this case, the graduate student may need assistance finding a new primary advisor. Finding a new advisor can be challenging, and graduate students should seek help from their Graduate Group chair. Sometimes the transition is smooth, but academic progress can be delayed as a result, and research projects may be adversely affected. Sometimes a new primary advisor is not available because of limits on faculty time or graduate student funding. If a new advisor cannot be found, the graduate student may not be able to continue in the program, and the faculty member's research program may be adversely affected. Therefore it is important to proceed carefully when considering a change in advisor.

3. In some cases, faculty and graduate students may wish to work directly with the relevant Department Chair or Graduate Group Chair. The Chairs have knowledge and access to resources that may help with solutions to conflicts and other problems. The Chairs may also seek counsel and support from the relevant School Dean or the Graduate Dean. The goal may still be informal resolution, and chairs and deans may offer to mediate discussions and negotiations with the parties concerned. The Department Chair and School Dean are especially important for issues regarding teaching assistantships and graduate student employment, and the Grad Group Chair and Grad Dean are especially important regarding graduate academic matters such as degree progress, policies and procedures, fellowships, and academic disqualification.
4. In rare cases, the above efforts at informal resolution may be insufficient. Faculty members or graduate students may wish to take more formal actions to address events or consequences that occurred in the course of their professional relationships. Regarding formal processes, graduate students may seek guidance from the Graduate Dean, and faculty may seek guidance from the Associate Vice Provost for the Faculty. Formal actions may include filing complaints or grievances with the [Office of Student Rights and](#)

[Responsibilities](#), or the [Office for the Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination](#). These offices and their websites have guidance on when formal complaints and possible actions are appropriate and how to proceed. Further resources and summaries of them are available on the [Graduate Division website](#).