Graduate Students' Rights

and

Responsibilities

University of California, Merced

Preface

Students[1] are members of both society and the academic community with attendant rights and responsibilities. (UC Student Policy Manual , section 101) The purpose of this document is to outline some of these rights and responsibilities, and to provide references to the policies that define them.

This document covers UC and UCM policy, but is not exhaustive. In particular, graduate students may also have other rights and responsibilities associated with the academic program in which they are enrolled. Academic units are responsible for providing graduate students with all information on such rights. Students are also expected to request such information should it not be made readily available.

Rights

Graduate students who are registered at the University of California, Merced have the following rights:

- To be free from discrimination in matters relating to admission, access, and treatment in University programs and activities. (UC Student Policy Manual , Appendix C)

- To be involved in the governance of both administrative and academic areas of the university. (UC Student Policy Manual , sections 120 and 70)

- To be assured of reasonable confidentiality in their communications with professors except in circumstances relating to violation of University policies.

- To refuse to perform tasks if those tasks are not related to their course of study, their terms of employment or their own professional or academic development.

- To be informed of the options for financial support available to them, and the eligibility requirements for each. Sources for this information include the UCM Office of Graduate Studies, the UCM Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships, and students' academic units.

- To be informed of the criteria for, and terms of, employment as Teaching Assistants/Associates (TAs) and Graduate Student Researchers (GSRs). Sources for this information include the TA union contract , the Academic Personnel Manual and the Graduate Advisor's Handbook .

- To have all academic decisions affecting their academic standing, including the assignment of grades, based upon academic considerations only, and administered fairly and equitably under policies established by the Academic Senate. In professional curricula, such decisions may include consideration of performance according to accepted professional standards. (UC Student Policy Manual , section 171.09)

• To be provided with well-defined criteria for completion of degree requirements at the time of admission. (Graduate Advisor's Handbook)

• To be advised in a timely manner of all changes in the rules, policies, and procedures related to their academic program. (Graduate Advisor's Handbook)

• To be required to complete only the degree requirements which were published in the UCM Catalogue at the time of admission. (If the requirements should change after the student's admission, some degree programs may give the student the option of fulfilling the new requirements instead.)

• To be informed of their degree program's policy on normal and maximal times to degree.

• To be expected to complete program milestones (comprehensive and qualifying exams, advancement to candidacy, dissertation/thesis topic defense, dissertation/thesis final defense) at times which are in accordance with graduate group policy.

• To receive regular evaluations of their progress toward their degree objective by the graduate group. (Graduate Advisor's Handbook , "Academic Advisement and Evaluation")

• To make progress toward their degree goal without undue delay on the part of faculty.

• To make certain decisions independently of their faculty advisors. This right is subject to restrictions imposed by the university and the student's department/program, such as the policies on satisfactory progress and time-to-degree. These include the right to:

  o Choose a thesis/dissertation advisor.

  o Choose a thesis/dissertation topic. A student's advisor can veto a topic that is outside his/her area of expertise or available funding if applicable.

  o Be consulted on the membership of their research committee.

Note: Just as a student has the right to choose an advisor, an advisor also has the right to decline a request to serve in that capacity. Also, if a student and advisor cannot agree on one of these points, either may choose to sever the advisor/advisee relationship. In particular, these rights do not force an advisor to retain a student who refuses to accept the advisor's guidance in these matters. It is also important to note that these rights do not force a degree program to retain a student if no qualified individual is willing or able to act as the student's advisor.

• To be free from University discipline for actions committed involuntarily or under duress. However, violations committed under the influence of drugs, alcohol, or illegal substances will be subject to discipline. (UC Student Policy Manual , section 171.06, and the UC Merced Student Handbook).

• To be able to access their academic file as specified by the UC Student Policy Manual , section 130.40.

• To be informed of policies and procedures for procuring on-campus housing, including

information on availability, expected time on wait list, limitations on stay (including restrictions, if any, imposed by academic policies), and restrictions on eligibility.

• To be consulted on matters affecting both the academic and nonacademic experiences of students, and especially those decisions which directly affect their welfare, through drawing upon official student representation, as well as additional means for seeking student input as appropriate. (UC Student Policy Manual , sections 171.01 and 171.02)

• To request an investigation into a possible conflict of interest if the student's advisor has a financial interest as defined in Section 028 of the Academic Personnel Manual in an outside entity related to a project on which the student is working. Additional sources of information on this and other types of conflict of interest may be found in the UCM Graduate Advisor's Handbook), and the UC Student Policy Manual

• To have access to basic outpatient health care services on any University of California campus, under conditions that apply to students registered on that campus. (UC Student Policy Manual , section 171.15)

• To be informed of all these rights upon enrolling at UCM.

Responsibilities

Student conduct is governed by policies described in the UC Student Policy Manual. Graduate students should be aware of the expectations for their behavior as students, and of their responsibilities as instructors

• Graduate students should become familiar with the general provisions of UCM's student conduct policies. They must follow UCM's policy on academic honesty.

• Graduate students are expected to report their research results accurately and honestly, and to uphold ethical norms in their research methodology.

• All international students new to UCM are required to check in with the International Programs Office when they arrive in Merced. Students should bring their I-20/DS-2019, passport with visa stamp, and I-94 card and address information if available.

• Students who violate University policies and procedures may be subject to disciplinary procedures published in the UC Student Policy Manual , Section 103.

• University employees (including graduate students serving as TAs, lecturers, or GSRs) who violate University policies and procedures may be subject to disciplinary procedures published in the Academic Personnel Manual , or the collective bargaining agreements as appropriate. (UC Student Policy Manual , section 40.20)

Guidelines

Certain aspects of the experience of being a graduate student are not matters of formally defined policy, but are reflections of UCM's academic, social, and professional cultures. This section gives some guidelines on these matters.

- Generally, a professor should not discuss a student's performance or behavior with other students. Discussion of the student's performance among faculty should be limited to the student's academic performance and qualifications as a graduate student.
- Graduate students can usually expect to be listed as a co-author of publications which involve significant contributions of ideas or research work from the student. However, specific practices may vary by discipline and academic unit.
- Graduate students are expected to devote an appropriate amount of time and energy toward achieving their degrees within the standards for "normal time" that apply to their degree program.
- Graduate students are expected to take the initiative in asking questions that promote their understanding of academic requirements, University policy, and financial support.

Resources (Documents and Organizations)

The organizations and documents listed below may be of use in helping graduate students to understand University policies that relate to their rights and responsibilities:

- UC Student Policy Manual (section 170.00): fees (including refund schedules), privacy policies, disclosure of information, "time to degree" policies
- UCM Graduate Advisor's Handbook: information on academic policies and related administrative procedures, including but not limited to:
  - transfer of credit
  - residency issues
  - leave of absence/part-time enrollment
  - academic appointments and graduate student employment
  - academic standards
  - examinations

Resolving Conflicts

The organizations listed below assist in resolving disputes within the University community:

• The UC Merced Graduate Division: gives guidance on formal and informal methods of resolving conflicts.

• UCM TA Union - the UAW (International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America [UAW] AFL-CIO and its Local Union) represents UCM graduate students that have teaching assistantship, reader, or tutor appointments (whether or not they are members of the union).

• UCM Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs: responsible for student code of conduct, coordinates the academic honesty policy, oversees student health and counseling services and investigates allegations of physical and/or emotional abuse.

Problems relating to academic policies should be resolved at the level of the Graduate Group where possible. If this is not possible, such problems should be addressed in consultation with the Graduate Dean.

NOTE: The documents listed above are understood to contain the official versions of the policies discussed in this document. If there is a discrepancy between material in this document and the referenced source document, the source is assumed to be correct.

Footnote

1. The term "student" means an individual for whom the University maintains student records and who: (a) is enrolled in or registered with an academic program of the University; or (b) has completed the immediately preceding term and is eligible for re-enrollment, including the recess periods between academic terms; or (c) is on an approved educational leave or other approved leave status, or is on filing-fee status. (UC Student Policy Manual , section 14.40)