

Guidelines for the Graduate Admissions Process and Codification of the Policies and Procedures Governing Graduate Admissions

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Guidelines for the Graduate Admissions Process

Purpose

In order to promote appropriate review of all applications to UCLA graduate programs and to provide the records both University and outside agencies often need, the Graduate Council has adopted the following set of guidelines for UCLA departments, departmental units, and interdepartmental programs to follow in the graduate admissions process.

Steps in the Admissions Process

The departmental, departmental unit, or interdepartmental program graduate admissions process shall involve five steps:

1. establishing, affirming, or revising standards and procedures by which applicants will be reviewed and decisions will be made;
2. communicating these standards and procedures to those participating in the admissions process;
3. reviewing application materials;
4. deciding which applicants to admit; and
5. preparing and storing files and records.

These steps are elaborated below.

1. Establishing, Affirming, or Revising Standards and Procedures

For every graduate degree offered, the sponsoring department, departmental unit, or interdepartmental program shall decide what items or sources of information must be available for an applicant (e.g., GRE, portfolio, personal statement); what items or sources of information are recommended but optional; any standard criteria or minimal standards (e.g., Junior-Senior grade point average of 3.5); any criteria or enrollment limits arising from the admitting unit's structure (e.g., applicant must have a tenure-track faculty member willing to sponsor him or her); what the profiles of strong applicants would look like; the process by which applicants will be reviewed and decisions to offer admission or reject will be made; the participants in this process; and the safeguards in place to avoid any conflict of interest. These decisions must conform to the "Graduate Council-Approved Codification of the Policies and Procedures Governing Graduate Admission."

2. Communicating Standards and Procedures

Each department, departmental unit, or interdepartmental program shall have written descriptions of its standards and procedures for admissions to each of its graduate degree programs. That is, the decisions described in the preceding section (Establishing, Affirming, or Revising Standards and Procedures) shall be written down. The dates during which each description is operative shall be recorded on it. These descriptions shall be given to all departmental, unit, or program members participating in the admissions process. The department, departmental unit, or interdepartmental program may decide whether it wishes to make these descriptions available to applicants.

3. Reviewing Application Materials

It is the responsibility of the faculty of the department, departmental unit, or interdepartmental program to decide who should participate in which aspects of the review process. There is no *a priori* reason why the faculty may not choose to involve ladder faculty, non-ladder faculty, students, or staff in the process. However, the process must ensure that those involved should not have a conflict of interest that might influence the outcome of that process. Should one person alone be given responsibility for initial review, ranking, or other categorization of applicants, it is strongly recommended that the person's work be reviewed or checked by someone else. At least two Academic Senate faculty members must be involved in the review of all applicants. It is important that all reviewers, some of whom might gain access to the records of peers in this process, be provided with information and training and required to sign agreement forms regarding the protection of the confidentiality of applicant and student records. These steps are especially important with respect to new participants in the process such as students and new faculty.

4. Deciding on Admission Offers and Denials

For each applicant, the responsible department, departmental unit, or interdepartmental program shall have a written record of the reasons why he or she was offered or denied admission to the graduate program. The record should contain enough information that reviewers outside the department (e.g., Graduate Division staff or Office for Civil Rights staff) would be able to understand the basis for the admission decision and to compare the decisions made for different applicants.

5. Keeping Records

In order that periodic audits of the admissions process can be conducted, the department shall keep all records

for no less than three years. The following materials must be retained: each individual's application materials, the admissions standards and procedures in force at the time the applicant was reviewed, the full names of those who participated in deciding whether the applicant should be admitted or rejected, and the reasons for the offer of admission or rejection. The application materials retained for each individual should include all the items or sources of information determined to be necessary or desirable (see Establishing, Affirming, or Revising Standards and Procedures section) and anything else that was considered in arriving at the admissions decision (e.g., record of a personal interview, record of a conversation with the applicant's undergraduate adviser). In those cases where application materials (e.g., a portfolio) must be returned either to the applicant or to someone else, a written statement should be placed in the applicant's file indicating the nature of the materials, the fact that they were considered as part of the application, the evaluations made of the materials, and to whom they were returned.

Review of the Admissions Process

Henceforth, the normal Graduate Council eight-year review of a graduate program will include a review of the admissions standards and processes for that program.

Codification of the Policies and Procedures Governing Graduate Admissions

500.0 Graduate Admissions: Basic Authorization

Legislation authorizing the Graduate Council to set standards for graduate admissions is Regulation 510 of the *Regulations of the Academic Senate*:

“Persons holding the degree of Bachelor of Arts, Letters, Philosophy, or Science, from a reputable institution authorized by law to confer those degrees, maintaining standards for those degrees accepted by the Graduate Council concerned as equivalent to those of the University of California, or holding any other degree or certificate which the Graduate Council concerned may accept as equivalent, may be admitted as graduate students in the University of California, provided that the official credentials presented show that the scholarship requirements imposed by the Council of the Graduate Division concerned are satisfied.”

In addition, by an Assembly approved variance to Universitywide Regulations (*SR*, Appendix III), the Graduate Division is empowered to:

provisionally admit department-designated “exceptionally promising [undergraduate] students” as “Departmental Scholars, subject to the approval of the Graduate Council.”

Finally, as instructed by *SR* 520: entering foreign graduate students are required to pass “the regular examination in English required of entering foreign undergraduate students.”

500.1 Assignment of Responsibility for Supervision and Review of Admission and Degree Requirements

The Committee on Degree Programs shall review and advise the Graduate Council on graduate education policy matters. *Academic Senate Manual of the Los Angeles Division*, Appendix III, Part V, Title II (7).]

500.2 Delegation Of Responsibility for Administrative Supervision of Admissions Procedures

- A. The Graduate Dean is delegated the responsibility of developing, establishing, and supervising administrative procedures and practices to carry out the policies promulgated by the Graduate Council under *SR* 510, or as recommended to the Council by its Committee on Degree Programs.
- B. The Graduate Dean is authorized to appoint an Associate Dean to act as his/her deputy in the development, establishment, and supervision of the necessary administrative practices for an effective admissions procedure.
- C. The Graduate Dean may redelegate the establishment of administrative procedures for implementing regulations and policy to departmental, school, or college faculty or faculty administrators. The Dean of the Graduate Division remains responsible for all decisions and actions taken. (Graduate Council Annual “Delegation of Authority Document.”)

500.3 Determination of Acceptable Institutions and Degrees

- A. Degrees conferred by U.S. institutions (four year liberal arts colleges, institutes of technology, and universities with arts, letters, science and five year professional curricula, e.g., medical) are acceptable

when they are conferred by institutions fully accredited by the six major regional accrediting associations and rated “AG” as recorded in the biennial *Transfer Credit Practices of Designated Educational Institutions*, published by the American Association of Collegiate Registrar and Admissions Officers (AACRAO).

- B. Degrees conferred by regionally accredited U.S. institutions allowing credit for the General Record Examination (GRE) or non-academic prior learning, and degrees conferred by “C-rated” schools, with “Candidate for accreditation” status, are not considered “equivalent” to those conferred by the University of California. Applicants holding such degrees will, however, be considered for admission by the Graduate Division upon special recommendation of the department/program.
- C. U.S. degrees from unaccredited (less than “AG rating”), unrated or unlisted schools are not acceptable for graduate admission. Holders of such degrees may appeal a denial of admission according to the process established in 500.5 below.
- D. Foreign degrees are considered acceptable from those institutions so designated in such authoritative reference works as *The International Handbook of Universities Yearbook* and other reputable international and national publications. If necessary, the following guidelines shall be used:
 - 1. Applicants who have completed studies at, and received diplomas or professional titles from, institutions outside the United States, should ordinarily have completed 16 or 17 years of study: 12 years at the elementary and secondary school level and four or five years at the university level. Eligibility is judged by grades (marks), class obtained, or rank achieved in class.
 - 2. Applicants with degrees from schools organized according to what is known as the British tradition are expected to have completed an Honours degree in first or high second. Applicants with degrees from schools in Bangladesh, Burma, India and Pakistan, countries in which schools differ from the standard British tradition, must show completion of a degree program requiring at least four years of study beyond the Intermediate or comparable examination level. This requirement may most commonly be met by presenting a master’s degree or the Bachelor of Engineering or Bachelor of Technology degrees. The minimum

scholastic requirements are as follows: a) a First or High Second Class placement, or at least 55% on the master’s degree and b) a First Class placement on the B.E. or B.Tech. degrees. Evidence of class placement must be stated in the official records submitted.

- E. Foreign degrees are considered not acceptable when they are three-year ordinary or “Pass degrees” in the British tradition, professional diplomas in librarianship, social work, physical education, health education, etc., or diplomas and higher certificates from technical or vocational schools in foreign educational systems. Holders of such degrees, diplomas, or certificates may appeal the decision for denial of admission according to the process established in Section 500.5 below.

500.4 Determination of Conditions Satisfying Minimum Admission Standards

- A. By Graduate Council action, a minimum grade point average of “B” (3.0 on a 4.0 scale), or its equivalent, in upper division undergraduate study and in graduate level study, if any, is required for graduate admission. Applicants who have completed three years of undergraduate course work, or the equivalent, are considered when they specify they have the remaining year of course work in progress, and describe the proposed course work for that year.
- B. **Dean’s Special Action.** Applicants who have failed to meet the minimum grade point average requirements may be considered for departmental review and recommendation if their documentation includes, individually or in combination:
 - 1. Strong letters of support;
 - 2. High test scores (GRE, GMAT, etc.);
 - 3. Evidence of convincing interviews or auditions;
 - 4. Close relationship of demonstrated professional or artistic competence to the graduate objective;
 - 5. Evidence of maturity as the result of experience in the Armed Services, Peace Corps, Vista, etc.;
 - 6. Evidence of membership in a targeted group, as defined by field enrollment patterns and University goals (e.g., women in engineering).

500.5 Appeal Procedures

- A. **Dean's Special Action.** When there is dispute over, or uncertainty concerning, the comparability of a student's degree, certificate, or diploma (e.g., if domestic: less than AG-rated, or a technical/vocational or seminary degree; if foreign: a strong pass class degree from a highly recognized institution), the Graduate Council, through its Committee on Degree Programs, authorizes the Dean of the Graduate Division to exercise informed and deliberate judgment to waive "degree equivalence".
- B. **Special Rulings by the Committee on Degree Programs.** When there are appeals from applicants denied admission under the policy established in 500.3 C and E, and the Dean of the Graduate Division determines there is appropriate cause, he or she will refer the appeal to the Graduate Council's Committee on Degree Programs.
- C. **Appeals by Departments.** Applicants denied admission by the Graduate Admissions Office on the basis of insufficient grade point average may appeal the decision to the department. Departments may present specially documented recommendations to the Dean or his/her designated representative for consideration by Dean's Special Action on the bases described in 500.4 B, above. The Dean or his or her representative is not bound to approve the department's recommendation.
- D. **Appeals by Applicants.** Applicants whose credentials indicate they have satisfied the minimum requirements for graduate admission, and who have been denied admission by their departments, may appeal that decision for cause. The appeal procedure is described in Part III, Appendix VI of the Academic Senate *Manual of the Los Angeles Division*. The Procedure is as follows:

"An applicant for graduate admission whose application for admission to the University has been rejected, may submit a **written** appeal for reconsideration for **cause** to the Dean of the Graduate Division within 30 calendar days after the date of the notice denying admission. [Am 5/28/81] Such appeals will be considered only if based upon appropriate cause such as (a) procedural error, (b) judgments based upon criteria other than those specified by the University, (c) personal bias, or (d) discrimination on the basis of race, sex, or handicap not pertaining to required academic performance. (Am 5/28/81] Disagreements over evaluation of academic quality will not be considered as an

appropriate basis for such appeals. The Dean will request the department chair or graduate advisor to review the departmental rejection. In cases of appropriate cause, the Dean of the Graduate Division will refer the appeal to the Graduate Council's Standing Committee on Degree Programs. In all cases of admissions appeals, so referred, the applicant must submit a **written** statement of the basis for the appeal to the Committee on Degree Programs, and may, at the discretion of the committee, make a personal appearance before it.

"This Committee will make a recommendation to the Dean as to the disposition of the case and the Dean of the Graduate Division will make the final decision. Every reasonable effort will be made to transmit a decision to the applicant within 90 calendar days of the receipt of the student's initial written appeal for reconsideration. [Am 5/28/81] In reporting the final decision of the Dean to the applicant, the basis of the decision and the nature of the recommendations of the Committee on Degree Programs will be included."

500.6 Application Processing and Evaluation Procedure

- A. Matters pertaining to the processing of applications for graduate admissions may be delegated by the Graduate Dean to another person who reports to him or her through the administrative structure he or she establishes.
- B. **Application Fee.** An applicant must pay the non-refundable application fee. Students who have previously registered in graduate status at UCLA, and who apply for readmission, must pay the non-refundable readmission application fee. Except as described in 500.6 B 2, below, applications and readmissions applications will not be processed prior to submission of the fee.
 1. The fee is refunded if:
 - a. the applicant filed for a term for which the department does not consider applications;
 - b. the program is not offered at UCLA;
 - c. the fee was paid on a duplicate application.
 2. The Graduate Dean may authorize an appropriate individual to issue to qualified applicants waivers for the graduate admission application fee and for

the readmission application fee (per authorization of Vice President Frank Kidner, March 14, 1969).

3. The fee is waived for currently enrolled students who are receiving financial assistance and submit proof from a university financial aid director.
4. Only one reactivation of application for readmission is accepted without fee. The readmission application fee is due with each subsequent readmission application.

C. Transcripts

1. Official transcripts of all baccalaureate and post baccalaureate course work must be submitted. Transcripts are defined as official or “acceptable” as follows:
 - a. For domestic students the transcripts presented shall be attested to by original embossments of the seal of the issuing institution and the inscription of the valid signature of the certifying official;
 - b. For foreign students, a duplicate of the official transcript, issued by the institution, will bear an original embossment or inscription of the valid signature, or, if the institution does not issue duplicate records, the copy of the official transcript must be certified. All foreign credentials issued in a language other than English must be accompanied by an English translation.
2. Submitted records will not be returned to the applicant, but photocopies may be made for a nominal charge and either given to the applicant or forwarded to another institution at the applicant’s request.
3. Professional degree holders must submit transcripts from each college and university attended to determine fulfillment of academic breadth requirements.

D. Additional Departmental Requirements.

Departments and interdepartmental degree programs may set forth additional admissions requirements, such as:

1. Additional GPA calculations;
2. Test scores of the Graduate Record Examination (Aptitude and/or Subject), the Miller Analogies Test and Doppelt Mathematical Reasoning Test, Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT),

and/or a higher specific score of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) examination;

3. Letters of recommendation;
4. Portfolios, tapes, slides, auditions, interviews;
5. Auditions, interviews;
6. Admission diagnostic and placement examinations;
7. Any other materials deemed appropriate by the admitting department or interdepartmental program.

500.7 Offers Of Admission

Offers of admission are made only at the recommendation of the department subject to the review by the Graduate Dean or his or her designated representative. The deadline for receipt by the Graduate Division of departmental recommendations of admission for any given quarter is the last day of the first week of instruction of that quarter. Applicants who are admitted are formally notified by the Graduate Dean.

- A. **Regular Admissions.** This offer is made when all necessary documents are on file and have been reviewed favorably, without stipulation, by the department.
- B. **Provisional Admissions.** This offer may be made when transcripts are outstanding to complete the dossier for registration, although those available justify a favorable recommendation. The applicant will be notified that registration is contingent upon receipt of the final official transcripts.
- C. **Conditional Admission.** This offer is made when the department stipulates certain conditions (e.g., completion of deficiency coursework).
- D. **Restricted Admissions.** This offer is made when the department restricts admission to a specific degree or certificate program; or when the Dean or his or her esigned representative or the department restricts the offer of admission to a specific number of quarters (to be reviewed at the end of the stipulated period).
- E. **Special Offers of Admission.** The Dean of the Graduate Division or his or her designated representative may grant admission in the following cases:

1. **Admission for “No Degree Objective” (NDO).** This offer is made on rare occasions to applicants who meet the entrance requirements imposed by the Graduate Council, and who seek to undertake coursework acceptable in graduate standing without a graduate degree objective (e.g., students making up subject deficiencies for entrance into medical school; teachers with master’s degrees or higher needing a term or two of refresher study for sabbatical leave; and foreign students on a year’s exchange).
2. **Dean’s Special Action (DSA).** Applicants who do not present a “standard” academic bachelor’s degree, or have not completed a bachelor’s degree, may be granted admission when they have demonstrated outstanding capabilities in their own careers, related to their desired graduate goals, or when they are members of a targeted group as defined by field enrollment patterns and University goals (see 500.4 B and 500.5 A).
3. **Admission as Departmental Scholar.** UCLA undergraduate students who have been nominated by a department for exceptional promise may be offered provisional graduate admission as Departmental Scholars. Students must show exceptional promise, have completed 96 quarter units at UCLA, or the equivalent at another institution, and have completed the requirements in preparation for a major. “Exceptional promise” is to be interpreted as meeting or exceeding the minimum grade point average which, if maintained, would qualify the candidate for College Honors. (See Appendix III, Regulation 510 of *Regulations of the Academic Senate; and Regulation A 300 of the Manual of the Los Angeles Division*). In accordance with the ruling made by the UCLA Senate Committee on Rules and Jurisdiction (March 19, 1975), the provisional admission into the Graduate Division means that the Departmental Scholar’s “Graduate status is subject to his fulfilling the requirements of both the Bachelor’s and Master’s degree programs.” The undergraduate and graduate majors need not be the same.

500.8 Duplication Of Higher Degrees

The University of California, in general, discourages the duplication of advanced degrees. In exceptional cases approval will be granted for the admission of advanced degree holders seeking a second graduate degree at the same level as, or at a lower level than the graduate degree they

already hold. In all such cases, the new degree must be in a different area than the one completed. If admitted, such students will be held to all the usual degree requirements and University regulations pertaining to fees, registration, examinations, advancement to candidacy, etc.

500.9 Admission Requirements for Registration

Students are permitted to register when the offer of admission is regular, conditional or provisional.

- A. Missing credentials must be submitted prior to the first day of instruction. Students may not register in the subsequent quarter until the missing transcripts are submitted.
- B. Passage of the English as a Second Language Placement Examination (ESLPE) is required of admitted international students if their native language is not English and they have completed a degree program in an institution where the language of instruction is not English. Failure to pass the ESLPE may result in cancellation of the student’s admission and/or registration. The Graduate Dean or his or her designated representative may waive this requirement when demonstrably justified.

500.10 Rejection of Application

- A. **Graduate Admissions Rejection.** Applicants who do not meet the minimum University requirements, and who are not eligible for consideration on the basis of Dean’s Special Action, are rejected by the Dean or his or her designated representative without consultation with the department.
- B. **Departmental Rejection.** The departments may recommend the rejection of applicants who have not met the approval of the departmental admissions committees on the following bases:
 1. Insufficient scholarship;
 2. Inadequate preparation in the major;
 3. Unsatisfactory GRE, GMAT, etc. scores;
 4. Unpromising portfolio;
 5. Unpromising dossier;
 6. Unpromising interview or audition;
 7. Number of slots in applicant’s area of interest have already been filled;

8. Graduate training not provided in the applicant's specified area of interest;
9. Other specified and pertinent reasons.

500.11 Renewal of Application

Application dossiers are kept on file for three years. Applicants who did not register, and who wish to apply again within that three year period, need only to submit another application form and transcripts of work completed since the original application was filed.

500.12 Readmission

Students who do not register in a quarter for any reason other than that they have been granted an official Leave of Absence are considered withdrawn and must file an application for readmission. Readmission applications may not be processed if a restriction is placed on the UCLA record card.

500.13 Guidelines for Evaluating Contributions to Diversity for Graduate Admissions

University policy states that an applicant's race or gender may not be considered in selection for student or faculty appointments. However, to attract excellent graduate students who will contribute to the University's diversity imperative, departments may give special consideration to the following factors in selecting graduate students for admission (and financial support):

- A. Applicants who have engaged in service efforts or programs to increase participation in science, education, humanities, fine arts, or social sciences by groups historically underrepresented in higher education; for example:
 1. Participation as undergraduates in academic preparation, outreach, tutoring or other programs designed to remove barriers facing women, minorities, veterans, people with disabilities and other individuals who are members of groups historically excluded from higher education;
 2. Participation in programs designed to address diversity and equity in higher education such as the Society of Women in Physical Sciences, SACNAS or other equivalent programs in all disciplines;

3. Demonstrated record of mentoring other students from groups underrepresented in their field or historically underrepresented in higher education.

- B. Applicants who have the potential to contribute to their graduate program through their understanding of the barriers facing women, domestic minorities, students with disabilities, and other members of groups underrepresented in higher education careers, as evidenced by life experiences and educational background; for example:
 1. Attendance at a minority-serving institution;
 2. Experience with issues facing students with disabilities;
 3. Ability to articulate the barriers facing women in science and engineering;

- C. Applicants who display drive and motivation to persist and succeed in their careers in spite of barriers in higher education that disproportionately disadvantage them;

- D. Applicants with the potential to bring to their research the creative critical discourse that comes from their non-traditional educational background or their understanding of the experiences of individuals from groups underrepresented in higher education;

- E. Applicants who, in addition to their primary field of interest, have the potential to make research contributions to understanding the barriers facing women and domestic minorities in science and other academic disciplines; for example:
 1. Studying patterns of participation and advancement of women and minorities in fields where they are underrepresented;
 2. Studying socio-cultural issues confronting underrepresented students in college preparation curricula;
 3. Evaluating programs, curricula and teaching strategies designed to enhance participation of underrepresented students in higher education;
 4. Applicants who have the communication skills and cross-cultural abilities to maximize effective collaboration with a diverse cross-section of the academic community.

- F. Applicants who have research interests in subjects that will contribute to diversity and equal opportunity in higher education; for example:
 1. Studying patterns of participation and advancement of women and minorities in fields where they are underrepresented;
 2. Studying socio-cultural issues confronting underrepresented students in college preparation curricula;
 3. Evaluating programs, curricula and teaching strategies designed to enhance participation of underrepresented students in higher education;
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 3. Evaluating programs, curricula and teaching strategies designed to enhance participation of underrepresented students in higher education;
 4. Applicants who have the communication skills and cross-cultural abilities to maximize effective collaboration with a diverse cross-section of the academic community.

1. Research that addresses issues such as race, gender, diversity and inclusion;
2. Research that addresses health disparities, educational access and achievement, political engagement, economic justice, social mobility, civil and human rights;
3. Research that addresses questions of interest to communities historically excluded by or underserved by higher education;
4. Artistic expression and cultural production that reflects culturally diverse communities or voices not well-represented in the arts and humanities.