

Report on Graduate Curricular Plans for 2020-2021

PREPARED BY

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COVID-19 Strategic Advisory Group to the Chancellor*

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PRINCIPLES FOR GRADUATE EDUCATION DURING COVID-19

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. **Public Health.** The health and safety of UCI employees and students remains our top priority. No faculty member, staff member, nor student should be compelled to be on campus while teaching and/or learning during terms impacted by COVID-19 in keeping with UCI campus-wide policy.
2. **Equity and Inclusion.** UCI is committed to equity and inclusion in its graduate programs. UCI is a public institution committed to the success of its large population of first generation, under-represented, and otherwise minoritized students.
3. **Educational Continuity.** UCI is committed to graduating a new class of graduate and professional students each year. Thus, our programs should adapt to ensure that all are making progress towards graduation in a timely manner.
4. **Instructional Quality.** UCI is committed to ensuring that all graduate students in our academic programs have the opportunity to learn and demonstrate the competencies necessary for their programs.
5. **Excellence in Graduate Education.** UCI is committed to delivering the highest quality graduate education and producing scholarship that sustains UCI's reputation for excellence and is consistent with our values.

STRATEGIC PRINCIPLES

1. Decisions about testing, physical distancing, and course scheduling and delivery will be based on the best scientific, medical, and epidemiological evidence as interpreted by UCI experts, the Orange County Department of Health, and California and Federal guidelines.
2. Decisions about reopening educational environments should be made in consideration of all programs in all schools and the Graduate Division. No program should make decisions that interfere with the orderly progress of another program's curriculum.
3. Faculty, staff, and students will work together to limit the negative impacts of COVID-19 as much as possible with known information at the time. At all times the well-being of the graduate student population will be at the forefront of guidance for 2020-2021 curricular and co-curricular activities.
4. Some instructional activities for graduate students are planned to be on campus with others remote in 2020-2021. In-person instruction may swiftly move to remote, consistent with public health guidance.
5. Due to limited space and facilities, assignments for educational and co-curricular activities that can only be conducted in person will be prioritized; graduation needs for advanced students and cohort-building for early students will be considered.
6. Some training requires physical proximity between individuals that is closer than that directed by physical distancing recommendations (e.g., clinical work, some performing arts). In those circumstances, the faculty in charge should follow specific protocols, approved by the Dean or Dean's delegate, with safety measures that are consistent with infection control guidelines (masks, gowns, gloves, face shields) for prevention of spread of diseases.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT

1. All planned teaching activities must take into account the current public health context and respond accordingly.
2. Decisions about on-campus activities will be impacted by the latest evidence and expert recommendations regarding COVID-19, campus policies, and coordination with UCI Housing and best practice recommendations for accommodations.

3. Graduate education spans research, teaching, and learning. As such, major decisions regarding graduate research will come under the guidance of the Vice Chancellor for Research, graduate teaching under the dual guidance of the Vice Provost for Teaching and Learning and the Vice Provost for Academic Personnel, and graduate learning under the guidance of the Vice Provost for Graduate Education.
4. Regardless of the content of this document, the Chancellor retains ultimate authority for activities on the UCI campus.

IMPLEMENTATION

Regardless of what is in this document or what plans are approved by Schools, at all times, the campus will be expected to comply with local [Orange County public health orders](#), including but not limited to recommendations by age, health status, or other considerations.

This guidance is based on existing campus policy and practices and is expected to change as state and local government and campus directives.

COMPLIANCE with CA, UC, and Campus Policies:

1. All aspects of instruction at UCI should follow all applicable federal, state, and county public health directives and University of California and UCI policies. When guidance conflicts, the UCI campus will tend towards to most restrictive policies. Therefore, plans should include adaptations and safety precautions consistent with public health guidance. In addition, all personnel are expected to follow all UCI health and safety guidelines, including all special or temporary COVID-19 requirements outlined in specific plans. The Campus Recovery Implementation Team will be consulted and will advise on all aspects of Graduate Education Planning and Implementation.
2. Disciplinary or retaliatory action, including grading decisions, should not be taken against instructors or students who choose to attend classes or perform work duties remotely during any quarter/semester in which physical distancing is recommended on campus for any portion of that academic term, or while personal or household factors continue to put them at higher-risk for contracting or suffering from COVID-19, or responding to the effects of COVID-19. Instructors should make their course offerings available to students who choose to attend remotely even in the case of in-person meetings whenever possible, and students will not be penalized for remote attendance. In the event that a course cannot be offered remotely, and a student cannot attend in person, other accommodations should be offered by the graduate program to ensure appropriate degree progress.
3. For in-person courses, once a plan for a fall course has been written by faculty and/or chairs and approved by the Dean (or Dean's designee), appropriate graduate counselors should have access to the syllabi and be able to help students think through choices about coursework given these circumstances.
4. Graduate Division, Office of the Vice Provost for Teaching and Learning, and Academic Personnel will work together to support graduate instruction across Schools and consult with Academic Deans to promote implementation of these principles and consult with Academic Deans regarding any difficulties.
5. UCI Graduate Division, Institutional Research, and/or Teaching and Learning will collect data on course learning outcomes, program learning outcomes, and degree progress per usual procedures. These data will be analyzed to improve the quality of online instruction as well as measure and report any disparities or other challenges that emerge from use of online instruction during this emergency.
6. Faculty, staff, and students who have concerns about these considerations should consult with the appropriate Graduate Program Chair, HR business partner, or AP personnel.

FACILITIES, FINANCE, AND HUMAN RESOURCES

Training for graduate students and instructional staff: All people teaching or learning on-site are required to view a training video entitled “Returning to Campus,” which explains what COVID-19 is, how it is transmitted, the steps we’re taking to reduce potential exposures, and what you can do to protect yourself and others. The video will be available through the [UC Learning Center](#) and can be searched by title using the *Find a Course* function. Any instructors or students who did not watch this video during the summer as part of Research Return to Campus activities will be required to view it prior to any on campus academic activity. Instructors will not be allowed to teach in-person until they have completed their mandatory training. Students who do not complete mandatory training may be subject to holds placed on their registration.

Measures to control the spread: Graduate program return to campus activity will be in accordance with prevailing federal, state, and local government public health directives and campus directives. The best ways to limit the spread of the novel coronavirus are through frequent hand washing, use of face coverings, physical distancing, self-screening for symptoms, viral testing for those with symptoms, and contact tracing and supported isolation of individuals testing positive. As we return to campus:

- To assist employees and students in their daily assessment, the UCI Working Well™ Daily Symptom Check application has been developed as part of the new Working Well™ program. All UCI employees, which includes faculty, graduate students, and staff, as well as non-employee students who are present on campus are expected to complete the symptom self-assessment and respond within the application every day during their regularly scheduled work/school week. The application sends an email to all people active within the application on a daily basis, Monday – Sunday. Employees and students may choose, at their option, to use the Now® Mobile application either in conjunction with or in lieu of responding to the daily email.
- Custodial services will be enhanced with the hiring of additional workers and more frequent cleaning schedules.
- Supplies including hand sanitizer, disinfectant spray, paper towels, disposable gloves, and washable face coverings will be provided centrally to returning groups.
- Signs and other reminders encouraging physical distancing will be common.
- We will wear face coverings while in campus buildings and in outdoor campus spaces where it is not possible to ensure physical distancing, in accordance with orders from the Orange County Health Agency. In addition, all members of the UCI campus community will wear face coverings when in the same room as others. When outdoors, they will wear them within 6 feet of others, as recommended by the California Department of Public Health. Facial coverings are not required for those unable to wear them for health or other reasons, as set forth in the Orange County orders. Remember that we wear face coverings to protect each other.

Graduate Student Resource Needs: Due to the unique nature of graduate student coursework and scholarship, graduate and family housing, and graduate student personal lives, graduate programs should make efforts to support their continuing funding, working, and living at UCI.

- Graduate Division and Finance and Budget will work together to ensure that all students who fit the criteria laid out by [UCOP for residency for tuition purposes](#) are billed appropriately.
- Measures will be developed to ensure that students with children can attend class. Measures MAY include emergency childcare, remote learning, funding to support in home childcare support, and/or children allowed on campus.

- Alternate funding should be provided for people at high risk who cannot perform their previously assigned GSR or TA duties whenever possible. These funding streams may include reassignment to remote TA duties or other remote work.
- Departments should seek opportunities to connect graduate students with remote speakers as part of remote seminars just as they would for on campus visitors who physically travel to campus.
- Departmental, School-Based, and Central “travel awards” for graduate students will be converted to “conference awards” to support remote attendance and conference fees as long as conferences are not offered in person. Because travel expenses will not be needed, more “Conference Awards” may be awarded at a lower value than “Travel Awards” support more students.
- Writing, professional development, and career development support for graduate students will be offered in a remote format for as long as physical distancing and other related public health restrictions are in place.
- In recognition of the need for many students to learn new research methods that are more amenable to remote research, departments are encouraged to offer additional and different methods courses. Students will also be encouraged to take advantage of opportunities through the UCI Division of Continuing Education, such as the existing partnership with [Udemy for Business](#), as well as additional targeted partnerships to be developed.
- UCI, including UCI Libraries and academic Schools, should help ensure that graduate students have adequate quiet study and online teaching and learning space with reliable WIFI access, to support the continuity of their education, research, and teaching.

EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND ACCOMODATIONS

- We must strive to rise to our values and principles in all coursework, degree progress, professional development, and co-curricular activities in terms of equity, diversity, inclusion, and appropriate accommodations.
- **Non-Discrimination.** Decisions about which personnel will return to the campus, when and for what teaching operations must be made in accordance with [UCI’s non-discrimination policy](#).
- **Accommodations.** Personnel may need reasonable accommodations, which can be facilitated by UCI [Disability Management Services](#) for employee concerns or the UCI [Disability Services Center](#) for student concerns. Authorized Officials, faculty members and students should carefully consider the needs of employees and/or students with current disability accommodations or those who will require new accommodations, whether for disability or other reasons.

GRADUATE COURSEWORK

1. General Principles.

- a. Faculty members, Graduate Program Directors, and Department Chairs should be prepared for their AY2020-21 graduate instruction to move between online and in person in response to changing circumstances.
- b. We must be timely and decisive despite unknown contexts. Faculty and staff should work together to make the schedule for each quarter in AY 2020-21 known as quickly as possible. Plans should include remote teaching options with the understanding that all plans are subject to change.
- c. There will be a point person in each School who will be responsible for monitoring the implementation of these procedures. This person should have authority to implement priorities and planning within the School, as well as working with other Schools. Likely individuals to fill this role are the Dean, Associate Dean, or other Graduate Education focused administrator.

2. **Course Formats.** Graduate programs should encourage and support faculty in the design of courses in line with research-based best practices. Various formats of instruction may be considered, such as:
 - a. Fully remote.
 - b. Dual delivery (e.g., Flipped classrooms, predominantly face to face with option for remote when necessary, staggered schedule with split sections).
 - c. Moved to an alternative quarter to accommodate COVID-19 related schedule changes.
 - d. In-person only in small sections with appropriate physical distancing (primarily available for courses that can ONLY be delivered in person, such as certain labs and studios).

3. **Scheduling and Course Assignment.** Courses may not be rescheduled within the same term (in terms of date and time) except in extreme circumstances. Physical course rooms may be moved, and in fact, likely will be moved in response to physical distancing recommendations. Courses may be cancelled or rescheduled to a different term by departments. Schools should submit a prioritized list of courses they would like to offer in-person to support the work of the Registrar in allocating rooms.
 - a. Current expectation of 18-40% capacity, depending on furniture and room layout, in rooms in which instructional activities will be held. Each School Dean who is interested in holding any in-person activities in new spaces (e.g., not traditional classrooms, conference rooms, outdoor spaces that have not already been checked) should put in a Purchase Order through Facilities Management to have the space “walked.” Schools or Departments should send a representative to ‘walk’ any non-traditional space with Facilities Management personnel to confirm intended usage.
 - b. Schools will consult with central campus scheduling authorities regarding classrooms and temporary classrooms regardless of their normal “ownership” with the goal of supporting maximum flexibility in scheduling for as long as physical distancing is recommended on campus. Schools will designate approaches appropriate for prioritizing for their disciplines and share these priorities with scheduling authorities on campus.
 - c. School schedulers will need additional time to work through schedule changes, to be flexible in accommodating faculty requests given campus-wide concerns, and help central scheduling with prioritization.
 - d. Instructional staff, including faculty, lecturers and ASEs, participating in in-classroom teaching must meet state and campus public health standards. Instructional staff who cannot perform in-person instruction should work with their department chairs to engage in an interactive process to reach a plan for reasonable accommodation. In most instances, this will be accommodated by using remote teaching or reassignment to another course. Department chairs are encouraged to consult their chief personnel officer and/or Academic Personnel Office regarding these requests.
 - e. Each school must determine caps for numbers of students in classrooms of different sizes at a given time in accordance with disciplinary concerns, public health guidance, ingress/egress logistics (including time and space needs), and the classroom setting. A campus-wide cap of 60 students for graduate courses is suggested.
 - f. Full cleaning between classes, if deemed necessary, will require “blocking” the room for every other course time; such gaps will be prioritized for larger classes.
 - g. Assigned seating should be used whenever possible and appropriate to support physical distancing during classes and between classes with appropriate accommodations for people with disabilities.

- h. Long-term curricular planning for cancelled/rescheduled courses must take into account how students will make progress in their degrees.
- 4. Grading**
- a. We expect courses to be graded using the same processes and standards as in traditional years. However, faculty are encouraged to implement greater flexibility depending on context. Graduate Council will monitor and provide additional recommendations as necessary and approved this plan of action unanimously at the June 11, 2020 Graduate Council meeting.
 - b. Incompletes have one full year to be replaced by a grade by Senate Regulation or will become Fails. Exceptions can be made through the Office of the Registrar and Graduate Division on a case by case basis.
- 5. Syllabi.** For courses with in-person class sessions, faculty will be required to include syllabi addressing all of the points below. For topics for which campus-wide guidance is available, syllabi should point to a website with approved language addressing policies and best practices. In cases in which no campus-wide policy or best practice is available, faculty should develop their own policies. Topics must include but are not limited to:
- a. Considerations for equity, diversity, inclusion, and appropriate accommodations, including accommodations related to public health best practices, and avoidance thereof.
 - b. Adherence to best practices and policies put forth by CRIT, EHS, and other strategic advisory groups on campus taking into account federal, state, and local guidelines for:
 - i. Face covering and physical distancing measures
 - ii. Classroom entry and exit protocols, including hand sanitizer and other measures
 - iii. Symptom self-assessment by all students and instructional staff prior to attending
 - iv. Maintenance of attendance records, and no penalties for non in-person attendance
 - v. Eating and drinking in class
 - c. Facilities
 - i. Room, seat, and area cleaning
 - ii. Practices and procedures for instances of areas not meeting cleanliness standards
 - iii. Restroom, water station, stairwell, and other facility usage surrounding classrooms
 - d. Coordination
 - i. Small group interactions, particularly those that require in person engagement
 - ii. Timing for courses in synchronous sessions even when teaching in a remote format
 - e. Notification of exposure/contact tracing for students and faculty; plans for after such a notification
 - i. Students in shared classes may be asked to self-quarantine following a diagnosis of someone in the class.
 - ii. Instructors and teaching assistants may be asked to self-quarantine following a diagnosis of someone in the class.
 - iii. Student employees may have hiring units notified as well depending on OCHCA policies.
 - iv. Faculty should be prepared to move the entire course remote for up to two weeks following a positive diagnosis in their class.

- f. Violations of policies by students and instructional staff may be referred to Student Conduct, Academic Personnel, OEOD, and other bodies as appropriate.
- g. Plan for going remote should it become necessary will be essential for each syllabus.

TERMINAL DEGREE CONCERNS

- **Public Exams.** All “public” exams will continue to be conducted remotely during quarters in which physical distancing is recommended. As possible, committees can consider having the student and small faculty committee co-present, bearing in mind that all parties may still opt out of an in-person event. Regardless of the student and committee choice, the larger audience should remain remote as long as physical distancing recommendations are in place.
- **Major Exam Flexibility.** Graduate programs are strongly encouraged to be flexible regarding exams that represent major milestones in a graduate student’s career (e.g., Comprehensive or Qualifying Exams, Advancement to Candidacy, Thesis Defenses). Exam timing may be extended, exams moved from closed to open book, and changing of deliverables from public performances to other modalities are all temporary changes that may be made within the discretion of the graduate program during quarters impacted by Covid-19.
- **Research Courses and Research Activities.** Graduate research coursework and activities shall be bound by individual faculty research protocols that have been approved by the School and Department processes. Ultimate approval and authority for research activities rests with the Vice Chancellor for Research.
- **Graduate Scholarship.** Graduate students who need space on campus and away from home to work on their scholarship, even if it does not require access to specific physical resources, should be accommodated as space and public health considerations allow.