



**School of Politics, Security,
and International Affairs**

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

MA in Political Science Program Handbook

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The master's student handbook is designed to provide necessary information for master's students to progress in their academic career at UCF. This handbook provides additional information for master's students but neither replaces nor supersedes the UCF Graduate Catalog. Students are encouraged to be familiar with the [UCF Graduate Catalog](#) and for all UCF policies regarding graduate studies.

I. Introduction and Welcome

Welcome to the M.A. program of the School of Politics, Security, and International Affairs (SPSIA) and congratulations on your acceptance! I very much hope that you will enjoy your journey through the graduate program. The experience is both challenging and rewarding. The program differs substantively from the undergraduate program and I hope you will value the necessary intellectual collaboration with the faculty. You are expected to take responsibility for completing all the different parts of your degree program and to work in close collaboration with your chair as you write your MA thesis, or if you choose the non-thesis option, the faculty member supervising your paper.

The Master's program will prepare you for your future goals in several ways. Course work will guide you to relevant topics, readings, and research methods and provides the corner stone of your graduate education, especially during your first year. However, you are encouraged and expected to go beyond assigned readings and think creatively about pertinent and important research topics as you complete your course assignments. Furthermore, you will be required to engage in substantial writing assignments as well as statistical analysis during your course work.

The program will also prepare you to conduct your own research. To complete your degree, you are required to either write a Master's thesis or to complete additional course work and a research paper. The process of writing an M.A. thesis is challenging; a major piece of original research that requires a research proposal approvable by your thesis committee, careful planning through a research design, an extended literature review, and appropriate analysis. The non-thesis option also requires a research paper with many of the characteristics of the thesis but on a smaller scale. Both options will exceed the demands of your undergraduate research experience as well as that of writing term papers for your graduate seminars. Early planning and close collaboration with faculty members are crucial.

I assure you that the school faculty and staff will be of assistance to you to succeed in the program. I also encourage you to participate in the intellectual life of the school and the university. You are expected to make the necessary intellectual and personal commitments and to uphold the academic and ethical standards of UCF and the discipline of Political Science. Dr. Güneş Murat Tezcür, the MA Program Coordinator, is your first stop in seeking help but other faculty members, including myself, are also available and will provide assistance. Good luck in your career as a graduate student!

Dr. Kerstin Hamann, Pegasus Professor and Director

II. Mission Statement

The Master of Arts in Political Science program prepares students to enter positions in government and the private sector, advance their professional careers in a variety of fields including consultation, defense, environment, and philanthropy, and pursue more advanced graduate degrees such as a PhD in which the analytical ability to comprehend, influence, and respond to policies and initiatives is critical. The program also provides a well-rounded substantive curriculum for secondary school teachers seeking higher degrees and for teachers in community colleges. As such, the Master of Arts in Political Science program is designed to accommodate a range of professional and intellectual needs.

III. Contact Information

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School Director

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MA Program Coordinator

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Kyrie Ottaviani

Graduate Admissions Coordinator (contracts, comprehensive exams, general questions)

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Graduate Faculty

The following faculty members are available to teach and supervise you throughout your graduate career:

Professors

Terri Fine, Ph.D. University of Connecticut

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Research Areas: Religion And Politics, Political Psychology, Civics Education And Civil Rights

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Research Areas: Western Europe, Spain, Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

Roger Handberg, Ph.D. University of North Carolina

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Research Areas: Pre-Law, Judicial, Space/Defense/Security Policy, Military Space Policy

Peter Jacques, Ph.D. Northern Arizona University

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Research Areas: Environmental Change, Sustainability, Internships

Michael Mousseau., PhD. Binghamton University

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Research Areas: Causes of War and Peace

Mark Schafer, Ph.D. Arizona State University

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Research Areas: International Relations, Political Psychology

Güneş Murat Tezcür, Ph.D., University of Michigan

Jalal Talabani Chair of Kurdish Political Studies

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Research Areas: Kurdish politics; Middle East; Comparative Politics

Bruce Wilson, Ph.D. Washington University

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Research Areas: Comparative, Judicial, Latin America

Associate Professors

Jacopo Baggio, Ph.D., University of East Anglia
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Research Areas: Ecology and Politics, Networks

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Research Areas: International, War & Conflict, Counterterrorism

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Research Areas: International Relations, War & Conflict, Political Psychology

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Research Areas: American Politics, Law & Public Policy

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Research Areas: American, State & Local

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Research Areas: Comparative, Research Methods

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Research Areas: American, Methods, Southern Politics

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Research Areas: Judicial, Presidency, Pre-Law, Methods

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Research Areas: National security law and constitutional law

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Research Areas: Comparative Politics, International Relations, Immigration, Diasporas

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Research Areas: Civil-Military Relations, Gender, Africa and Middle East

Assistant Professors

Konstantin Ash, Ph.D., University of California San Diego
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Research Areas: Civil War, Ethnic Conflict, Counterterrorism

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Research Areas: American Politics, Political Psychology, U.S. Military, Research Methods

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Research Areas: Comparative & International Politics, Human Rights & Democracy

Kenicia Wright, Ph.D., University of Houston
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Research Areas: American Politics, Identity Politics and Intersectionality Research

Lecturers

Robert Bledsoe, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus University of Florida
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Research Areas: International Law, Geography, Pre-Law

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Research Areas: American Politics, Public Law, Research Methodology

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Research Areas: American Politics, Congress

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Research Areas: Judicial Politics, American Politics, Presidency

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Research Areas: American Politics and Political Theory

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Research Areas: Comparative, Immigration

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Research Areas: International, War & Conflict

IV. Advising and Mentoring

Advising and mentoring are two essential elements in a graduate student's career from the beginning. Graduate students receive guidance from two advisors with distinct roles. The MA Program Coordinator provides guidance on overall academic requirements, program and university policies and procedures, while the thesis/non-thesis advisor serves more as a mentor providing guidance on research, professional guidance and socialization, and other areas of academic and professional interest. During their time in the program, students may be mentored by several different individuals. Dysfunctional mentoring/advisement relationships should be reported to the MA Program coordinator or School Director, who will take action to address the situation.

The MA Program Coordinator

The MA Program Coordinator serves as the program advisor for all MA students especially during their first few semesters. The program advisor helps students identify which courses to enroll in during their first semesters, advises them on their program of study, and is responsible for all program-related matters. The program advisor is the only one who can authorize course substitutions or any other exceptions to the program of study as specified in the graduate catalog. The program advisor needs to be consulted on a regular basis to ensure that the student progresses appropriately through the program and needs to sign all forms relating to completion of the program.

The Faculty Chair

The chair supervises the student's progress towards completion of the thesis or non-thesis, discusses the research necessary to complete the thesis, and may also be involved in mentoring the student's professional development, for example through attendance in professional conferences. In many ways, the chair serves as the intellectual mentor to the student. Students must select a chair from the school's faculty; the MA Program Coordinator can also assist them in identifying an appropriate chair. Generally, chairs have substantive expertise in the area that will be the subject of a student project. Frequently, students identify potential chairs as they take courses in areas of interest. Hence, it is a good idea to think about potential thesis/non-thesis topics and chairs while enrolling in courses. Students should begin to consult with faculty members about chairing their thesis or non-thesis while they are finishing their course work to facilitate a smooth transition from taking classes to planning their thesis or non-thesis research. In some circumstances, a student may need to choose a different thesis/non-thesis chair with the help of the MA Program Coordinator.

V. Degree Requirements

A student will have to complete several components, or milestones to finish the program and obtain the MA degree. These steps are sequential though there might be some overlap in time. A comprehensive degree plan is available [here](#).

- A. Program of Study (PoS)
- B. Core Coursework and Electives
- C. Comprehensive Exam (after the two methodological core courses (POS 6736 & POS 6746) are completed, typically in the spring semester of the first year if a student starts in the fall)
- D. Writing and Defense of Thesis/Non-thesis Paper
- E. Graduation

A. Program of Study (PoS)

A student's program of study will be drawn up in consultation with the MA Program Coordinator in their first semester. The form is available [here](#). The student is required to seek approval for any updated to that plan from the MA Program Coordinator and submits a new PoS. A program of study consists of the following 33 credit hours of course work.

B. Coursework

First, you will complete the required coursework. This work will consist of 12 hours of core courses and 15-21 elective hours. Typically, students take three courses (9 credits) in a semester. Students refer to the graduate catalog to see a full statement of the Political Science MA Program curriculum.

Core courses —12 Credit Hours

Your required core curriculum is outlined below. With some exceptions, each required course is offered once per year, in either Fall or Spring. Students often use Summer to take an elective if one is offered or to pursue independent study with faculty who consent to advise them. It is expected that a student takes the required courses at the first opportunity they are offered. POS 6736 and POS 6746, the two methodological courses are offered typically in fall semesters. Students need to take these two courses before taking their comprehensive exams (see below).

Take both methodological courses (typically in the first fall semester):

- POS 6736 Conduct of Political Inquiry (3 credit hours)
- POS 6746 Quantitative Methods in Political Research (3 credit hours)

Choose two of the following core courses (typically in your first spring semester):

- POS 6045 Seminar in American Politics (3 credit hours)
- INR 6007 Seminar in International Politics (3 credit hours)
- CPO 6091 Seminar in Comparative Politics (3 credit hours)
- POT 6007 Seminar in Political Theory (3 credit hours)

Elective courses —15 to 21 Credit Hours

Students taking the non-thesis option are required to complete 21 credit hours of elective credits. Students taking the thesis option are required to complete 15 credit hours of elective credits. All graduate seminars are 3 credit hours. Electives can be viewed [here](#).

Approval for substitution of approved electives must be obtained prior to enrollment. Students can take 7000-level courses only with instructor's consent. Students may pursue up to 6 hours of internship for elective credit with approval of the Graduate Program Coordinator. The combination of internships, independent study courses, and courses offered by other UCF departments and schools cannot exceed 6 hours.

The MA Program Coordinator must approve substitutions for these electives. That is, if you are planning to take a course outside of the list of approved electives, you must contact the MA Program Coordinator and ask for permission.

Students often use their coursework to begin to develop a thesis or non-thesis topic. Sometimes you will discuss a topic in class that sparks your interest, or you begin to think about related topics. Feel free to discuss your interests in possibly developing a topic early on with the professor teaching the class.

C. Comprehensive Exams

All MA students must take a comprehensive written examination. A student must be registered for at least one graduate credit hour in the semester you take the comprehensive exam. Students register to take the examination **at least two weeks prior** to its scheduled date. The exam is taken early in spring semester (i.e., in February) after students take Conduct of Political Inquiry (POS 6736) and Quantitative Methods in

Political Research (POS 6746) in their fall semester. These two core courses are the basis of the exam. The exam is designed to demonstrate proficiency in research methods and will consist of two parts. Part I of the exam involves critiquing and analyzing a journal article in the student's area of interests within political science (POS 6736). The article will be assigned by the faculty member evaluating the exams several days in advance. Part II will involve analysis and interpretation of statistical data (POS 6746). Students will have **eight hours** to complete both parts of the exam.

Students not passing (any part of) the examination need take it (that part) a second time **within nine months** on the dates that comprehensive exams are regularly scheduled. No student will be allowed to take the examination more than twice. Students failing the exam in both attempts are liable to dismissal from the program.

D. Writing and Defense of Thesis/Non-thesis Paper

D-I. The Non-thesis Option

The non-thesis option is designed for students who are not planning on applying to PhD programs, or who otherwise do not wish to make the substantial research and writing commitment required for writing a full thesis. A student choosing the non-thesis option must complete 6 additional credit hours of course electives in their respective areas. Thesis hours, if already taken, will not count for course credit for the 6 additional credit hours of coursework. Generally, full-time students who start in the fall and take six credits of coursework in the summer will complete their non-thesis requirements during the spring of their second year in the program.

The Non-Thesis Paper Committee

A master's student's research paper committee must consist of at least two members and be approved by the College of Graduate Studies. Of the two members, the chair must be an approved graduate faculty member in your program. Adjuncts, visiting faculty, courtesy appointments, or qualified individuals from outside the university may serve as the second member or co-chair of the committee, but may not serve as the chair. If there are co-chairs, one must satisfy faculty qualifications for serving as a chair of a dissertation advisory committee. The other co-chair must satisfy the minimum requirements for serving as a member of a dissertation advisory committee.

Qualifications of additional members must be equivalent to that expected of UCF faculty members. UCF faculty members must form a majority in any given committee. The committee needs to sign the Non-thesis Request form.

Students are expected to submit a complete draft of the paper to the committee at least three weeks prior to the Graduate Thesis/Dissertation Defense Deadline of the semester they intend to complete the project. Consult with the Graduate Admissions Coordinator for multiple deadlines that vary by semester. The committee will then make recommendations to the student on ways to improve the paper. The student must submit the final paper to the Graduate Admissions Coordinator no later than a week before the last day of classes of the semester the student intends to complete the project. The committee recommends final approval or disapproval of the research paper. In case of a split decision by the committee, the MA Program Coordinator will decide pass/fail.

The Non-Thesis Paper Writing and Defense

The student must complete an approved article-length independent research paper (around 6,000-8,000 words). The project/paper must have a component of original, independent research; it cannot be a literature review or research design only. The project/paper is **typically a product of a graduate research seminar and/or independent study paper**. The student needs to **present their research publicly** at a SPSIA research colloquium, other public academic forum such as paper/poster presentation at an academic conference, or in a defense meeting with the participation of their committee members. The student will indicate the venue the paper will be presented in the Non-thesis Approval form submitted early in the semester the student intends to complete the project, and the venue must be approved by the MA Program Coordinator. After the presentation, the student is responsible for revisions if requested by the committee members, collecting Non-thesis Approval form signatures from the committee members, and for completing the graduate student exit survey in the school office.

D-II. The Thesis Option—6 Credit Hours

The thesis option is designed for students who are planning on applying to PhD programs, or who otherwise wish to gain the substantial experience involved in research and writing a full thesis. While some students have a general idea what they would like to write their thesis on early in the program, other students develop ideas as they progress through their classes. It is always a good idea to discuss your ideas early with the professors that have expertise in that area. Sometimes students write a seminar paper that sparks their interest and develops into a thesis idea. Generally, full-time students begin to enroll in thesis hours at the beginning of their second year in the program. Generally, full-time students who start in the fall and take six credits of

coursework in the summer will complete their thesis during their second year in the program.

The Thesis Committee

A master's student's thesis committee must consist of at least three members and be approved by the College of Graduate Studies. Of the three members, two must be approved graduate faculty members in your program, one of whom must serve as the chair of the committee. Adjuncts, visiting faculty, courtesy appointments, or qualified individuals from outside the university may serve as the third member or co-chair of the committee, but may not serve as the chair. If there are co-chairs, one must satisfy faculty qualifications for serving as a chair of a dissertation advisory committee. The other co-chair must satisfy the minimum requirements for serving as a member of a dissertation advisory committee. Qualifications of additional members must be equivalent to that expected of UCF faculty members. UCF faculty members must form a majority in any given committee. The thesis committee needs to sign the thesis committee approval form.

The student will first write a research design proposal, which will be formally presented to the thesis committee and other faculty and graduate students at a thesis proposal hearing. The committee will then make recommendations to the student about the direction of the thesis. The thesis chair supervises and guides the student through the thesis progress and provides ongoing feedback. The completed thesis must be submitted to the thesis committee at least two weeks prior to the date of the thesis defense, and sometimes earlier based on the discretion of the thesis chair.

Thesis Hours Enrollment

Prior to enrollment into XXX6971 Thesis, your thesis committee must be reviewed and approved by Graduate Studies. This form can be found [here](#).

To be considered full-time, thesis students engaging in thesis research must be continuously enrolled in three hours of XXX6971 every semester, until they successfully defend and submit their thesis to the University Thesis Editor. This enrollment each semester reflects the expenditure of university resources.

The Thesis Writing and Defense

Once the thesis is completed, all committee members have had the opportunity to provide feedback on the entire thesis and have agreed that the student is ready, the

student will then orally defend the thesis. The defense meeting will be announced publicly in advance in coordination with the thesis chair and the thesis committee members. Students are expected to submit a complete draft of the thesis to the entire committee at least two weeks prior to the scheduled defense. The student also needs to submit an approved abstract and defense announcement to the Graduate Admission Coordinator, who will distribute the defense announcement. A thesis should be completed and ready for submission to the thesis committee early on in semester in which the student intends to defend the thesis.

During the defense, the student will give a brief summary of the thesis topic, methodology, and findings. The committee members will then ask questions about the thesis. They then decide on whether the thesis is acceptable, whether revisions are required. The student is expected to discuss the details of expectations for the defense with the thesis advisor. After the defense, the student is responsible for revisions if requested, collecting thesis approval form signatures from the committee members, and for completing the graduate student exit survey in the school office. The defense is open to the public, but attendees can participate in the discussion only with consent by the thesis chair.

[The Thesis and Dissertation Services](#) provide guidelines for preparing, formatting and submitting your thesis.

E. Graduation

Once the student is nearing completion of all program requirements, the student should consult with the MA Program Coordinator to ensure that all requirements will be met in the near future and confirm a date for graduation. All students are required to complete the graduate survey before graduation.

At the **beginning or before the semester of intended completion**, the student must meet with their thesis chair and Graduate Program Coordinator, who will advise whether to file an Intent to Graduate, which is done through myUCF. Note that a thesis should be completed according to deadlines set by the Graduate School, early in the semester in which you plan to graduate. Further, **the student must be aware of the various deadlines** associated with completing the dissertation and filing the final, electronic copy with the University Thesis Editor.

Students who submit an intent to graduate but are missing degree requirements (with no indication of completion in process) will be either approved for graduation on a pending status or denied. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the

requirements of their degree have been met; therefore, students are encouraged to review their SASS audit regularly. The audit can be found online at <https://my.ucf.edu> > Student Self Service > View Degree Audit Report.

VI. General Policies

Student Rights and Responsibilities

Satisfactory performance involves maintaining the standards of professional behavior and integrity, as judged by the Political Science MA Program.

Professional Behavior Standards

- SPSIA graduate students must treat others (fellow students, faculty, staff, and others) with courtesy and respect. Students should use language appropriate to professional settings (no vulgar, foul, or otherwise inappropriate expressions), respect personal space, and refrain from disruptive behavior. Bullying, defaming, or demeaning other students, faculty, or staff will not be tolerated.
- SPSIA students must adhere to all UCF policies on discrimination, harassment, etc., in their interactions with each other, faculty, and other UCF students.
- SPSIA graduate students must treat common work areas and other UCF property with respect and promote an environment where others can work efficiently.
- SPSIA graduate students must not engage in academic misconduct, as identified by UCF's Golden Rule or APSA's Guide to Professional Political Science Ethics.
- SPSIA students will follow appropriate Human Subjects protection regulations (see the section on IRB and fieldwork below).

Potential consequences for unprofessional conduct include:

- Counselling with program faculty on appropriate conduct.
- Conduct probation, which may involve conditions for appropriate behavior. If students violate these conditions, it may lead to their dismissal from the program.
- Dismissal from the program, either at the end of the current semester or, potentially, effective immediately.

Student Professional Conduct Process

[Note that the process below exclusively applies to the Student Professional Conduct Standards described above. It does not apply to discrimination or harassment cases, which are always referred [UCF's Title IX](#) office of the [Office of Institutional Equity](#) for investigation and redress. Academic misconduct cases are addressed via the procedures outlined in Golden Rule Section 5.015.]

The MA Program Coordinator decides to initiate the misconduct process, typically after they have received a formal complaint from a student, faculty member, or other person.

The MA Program Coordinator may also initiate the process *sua sponte*, based on evidence available to the coordinator absent a formal complaint. Receipt of a complaint alone does not mandate the coordinator to initiate the misconduct process if the evidence is not credible or does not indicate the existence of a violation. Accusations related to discrimination or harassment brought to the attention of SPSIA staff are beyond the scope of this process and **will always be reported** to relevant university offices for investigation and redress. *Students who believe that they are victims of sex or gender-based discrimination can directly contact UCF's Title IX Office (<https://letsbeclear.ucf.edu/get-help/>). Students who believe that they are being treated incorrectly due to other kinds of discrimination can directly contact the Office of Institutional Equity (<https://www.oie.ucf.edu/>).*

Once the MA Program Coordinator has decided to initiate the misconduct process, they set up a meeting (preferably in person) to lay out the nature of the misconduct that the student is accused of and discuss evidence of the misconduct. The MA Program Coordinator prepares a written statement of the accusation against the student and provides it to the student during the meeting. Another faculty member or SPSIA staff member may also be present and serve as a witness of the meeting. The MA Program Coordinator will prepare a memorandum for the record indicating that the meeting occurred. If they choose to do so, the student may reply to the accusation in writing within five business days.

Upon receipt of the student's response, the MA Program Coordinator decides whether to convene a faculty committee to consider the issue and ask for appropriate sanctions. A committee meeting will not be convened if the evidence is reasonably clear and if the student will only be warned or counseled about their misconduct.

If a committee is convened, the student will be given at least five business days' notice of the meeting. They will have an opportunity to present their views orally and

in writing. They may bring an unofficial advisor to the meeting, but that person does not have the right to address the committee. If the committee desires, they can pursue additional information and hold additional sessions. When they complete their deliberations, they provide the MA Program Coordinator with a statement of their findings and suggested sanctions, if any.

Once the fact-finding process is completed (either through the MA Program Coordinator acting alone or with the advice of a faculty committee), the Coordinator then identifies appropriate sanctions, documents the case, and notifies the School Director of the case's disposition. As with other graduate program decisions, probation and dismissal decisions can be appealed using the process described in UCF's Golden Rule.

Students are bound by [UCF's Golden Rule](#), which contains Student Rights and Responsibilities including regulations on academic honesty, plagiarism, and codes of conduct. If a student is found to be engaged in plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty, this can result in dismissal from the program. In addition, graduate students can find additional information about their responsibilities in the [Graduate Catalog](#).

Student-Faculty Disputes/Complaints

If a student has a conflict with a faculty member or believes that s/he has been treated in ways that are unfair or unprofessional by a faculty member in the school, s/he should speak with the MA Program Coordinator or the School Director. (If the complaint is directed against the MA Program Coordinator, s/he should speak with the School Director; if the complaint is with the School Director, s/he should contact the College of Sciences Dean's office.)

Upon receipt of the complaint, the MA Program Coordinator will notify the School Director of the complaint. If, given the nature of the complaint, the School Director and MA Program Coordinator agree that an informal dispute resolution process is appropriate, the latter may contact the faculty member and the student to facilitate a resolution of the conflict. In other cases, the School Director will address the matter with the faculty member. Note that in some cases University human resources policies may prevent the School Director from providing student with a full description of the disposition of a complaint.

Satisfactory Academic Performance

Satisfactory performance involves maintaining the standards of academic progress and

professional integrity expected in a particular discipline or program. Failure to maintain these standards may result in termination of the student from the program. If the student is in violation of any of the rules of professional integrity, the Graduate Committee can make a recommendation to the College of Sciences to revert the student to non-degree status.

The university requires that students must maintain a graduate status GPA of at least 3.0 or higher to maintain graduate student status, receive financial assistance, and qualify for graduation. The graduate status GPA is the cumulative GPA of graduate courses taken since admission to the degree program. This graduation requirement for a minimum 3.0 GPA in all graduate courses completed since admission into the graduate program cannot be waived. For more information, see [here](#).

Students are also required to maintain a 3.00 GPA in all coursework included in the program of study. Be aware that a B- (2.75) does negatively impact a GPA. Students are allowed to have at most six hours of C (2.00) grades or lower (including U and I) in their program of study by the approval of MA Program Coordinator. Grades of D+ and lower will count against the graduate GPA and those courses cannot be used toward completion of the degree requirements.

Students whose graduate status GPA drops below 3.0 but above 2.0 will be automatically changed to academic probationary status by the College of Graduate Studies for a maximum of nine semester hours of letter-graded course work (Grades A-F). If a student who is put on probation receives tuition support and employment in a graduate position, the program may discontinue either of these until the student resolves their status.

If a student is been placed on probation, s/he will be continued on probation until the completion of 9 credit hours, after which the student will be reviewed and removed from probation if the graduate status GPA is above a 3.0 or dismissed if the graduate status GPA is below a 3.0.

Exceeding 6 hours of C or lower grades or a program GPA or 2.00 or lower may result in dismissal from the program. The program of study must include at least 33 credit hours of post-baccalaureate, graduate course work (5000-level or higher) and at least half of the program of study must be at the 6000 level. For a full description of course requirements for a master's program refer to the section on Course Requirements in the most current graduate catalog at [here](#).

Master's students must complete at least 21 semester credits at UCF. For completion of

the degree, courses older than seven years cannot be applied toward a graduate program of study. The student must file a petition to have courses older than seven to be applied towards the program of study.

Full Time and Continuous Enrollment

Full-time graduate status is nine (9) hours during the Fall and Spring Semesters and six (6) hours during the summer semesters, until regular graduate course work is completed. Students who have completed all of their course requirements and are enrolled into three hours of thesis are considered full-time for fellowship, employment and tuition waiver purposes. Once a student has begun work on their thesis or non-thesis, he or she must be continuously enrolled in thesis course work.

Requirements that need to be met for federal loan eligibility override graduate full-time requirements. A student may be held to other enrollment requirements, as defined by financial awards, veteran status, employment, or other outside agencies.

For further information, refer [Graduate Catalog](#).

Seven-Year Rule

The student has seven years from the date of admission (prerequisite, articulation, and foundation courses are exempt) to the master's program to complete the degree.

Transfer Coursework

All transfer coursework must be at the graduate level, have a grade of B- or better, and must be approved by MA Program Coordinator. Transfer coursework is limited to 9 hours. For more details transfer coursework, refer to [here](#) (Transfer of Credit section).

Incomplete Grades

An Incomplete grade may be assigned when a student is unable to complete a course due to extenuating circumstances and when all requirements can clearly be completed within a reasonable time. Incomplete grades are not counted as satisfactorily completed courses and are not recognized as such by Graduate Studies for fellowship purposes or by Financial Aid. Students on financial assistance must check with the Financial Aid office to see if the receipt of an incomplete grade will affect their financial award. For more details, refer to [here](#) (Incomplete Grades section).

Withdrawal Policy

If a student decides to withdraw from a course, they must do so by the semester's withdrawal deadline. In doing so, the student is still liable for tuition and fees for the course. For a semester's withdrawal deadline, refer to the Academic Calendar:

<https://calendar.ucf.edu>.

Petitions and Grievances

It is the student's responsibility to be informed of graduate policies and procedures; however, should a student wish to request an exception to a university or program policy, he or she must file a petition that outlines the nature of their request. Normally, petitions are presented to the graduate program's coordinator and/or committee, the college's Coordinator of Graduate Services and the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies, and the Graduate Council for consideration.

Should a student wish to file a grievance, he or she should first review [UCF's Golden Rule](#) and the Academic Grievance Procedures in the Graduate Catalog.

VII. Professional Development

Seminars, Conferences & Publications

The school offers a Colloquium Seminar series where faculty members and graduate students can present ongoing research every semester. All graduate students are encouraged to attend these sessions and present their research.

Students are also encouraged to submit their research to Political Science conferences and to peer-reviewed journals. Faculty may alert students who have produced particularly outstanding research in their courses or on their thesis to existing opportunities. If students do truly outstanding work on a research project, their chair or instructor for the course might encourage them to submit their paper to a professional conference. Applying for a conference and finalizing a conference paper should be done in close consultation with the project advisor or course instructor.

Students are also encouraged to join a professional association such as American Political Science Association or International Studies Association and join the specific sections relevant to their research, which will familiarize them with ongoing trends and discussions in the discipline. Furthermore, students are encouraged to engage in professional development opportunities by writing book reviews for journals.

Students are encouraged to present their research at [UCF's Graduate Research Forum](#), generally held in March or April. The Research Forum is an opportunity for students to showcase their research and creative projects and to receive valuable feedback from faculty judges. Awards for best poster and best oral presentation in each category will be given and all participants will receive recognition.

Graduate students are encouraged to take advantage of the workshops on thesis and dissertation formatting, library research, and other workshops organized by the Graduate Student Association.

Conference and Research Travel

The College of Graduate Studies offers a Graduate Travel Award that provides funding for graduate students to deliver a research paper or comparable creative activity at a profession meeting. Students must be the primary author and presenter. More information can be found on [here](#).

Moreover, Graduate Students Travel Funding may be available to pay transportation expenses for graduate students who are delivering a research paper or comparable creative activity at a professional meeting. Contact the Student Government Association for more information. In some years, SPSIA will also have some funds to support MA student travel.

Students must file travel approval request for all professionally oriented travel (including conferences, fieldwork, etc.), even if they are not seeking school or university funding for their travel. Typically, student travel requests should be submitted at least 4 weeks before travel will occur. However, international travel may require more time for approval. Visits to destinations that are identified as "restricted travel" by UCF require longer time and approval by the Provosts office. For restricted travel destinations and regulations, see [here](#). Students contemplating travel to areas that may require Provosts' office approval should submit approval requests not less than 3 months before traveling. Students must keep relevant university authorities informed when their travel plans change (e.g., extending travel).

Fieldwork

For students writing a MA thesis, research activities involving fieldwork are most likely to be successful when they are carefully prepared in advance. In addition to practical arrangements (identifying research areas, making contacts with potential collaborators and participants, etc.) students should ensure that logistical and bureaucratic

arrangements are in place well before they are to travel. Depending on the areas in which they will conduct fieldwork, students may need to work with UCF global, the IRB, and other university offices to secure approval for their research and travel.

All MA theses involving human subjects must be approved by or receive a waiver from UCF's Institutional Review Board. Students whose research does not involve human subjects still need to have this verified by their thesis chair who then needs to inform the graduate program assistant by e-mail for a waiver. Failure to receive approval prior to the start of research involving human subjects can have serious consequences for a student's academic career and may be cause for termination from the program. Students contemplating international research involving human subjects should begin the IRB approval process **4 months** before they expect to begin research. All students whose research involves human subjects need to complete [CITI training](#) prior to the start of their research.

Career Services and Experiential Learning

Graduate career development issues are unique and include evaluating academic and non-academic career choices, discussing graduate school effect on career choices, as well as learning, evaluating, and refining networking and interviewing skills. Whatever your needs, the offices of [Career Services](#) and [Experiential Learning](#) offer services and resources to aid in the career exploration and job search of Master and Doctoral students in every academic discipline.

Students are also expected to attend various workshops in Academic Integrity, Graduate Grantmanship, Personal Development, Professional Development, and Research offered by the College of Graduate Studies. An updated list of these workshops is available [here](#).

Graduate Excellence Awards

School, College and University level awards of excellence are intended to showcase student excellence in academic achievement, teaching, research, leadership, and community service. These awards include:

- Award for Outstanding MA Thesis (School)
- Pollock-Ellsworth Award for Excellence in Methods in an MA Thesis (School)
- Award for Excellence by a Graduate Teaching Assistant (College)
- Award for Excellence in Graduate Student Teaching (College)
- Award for the Outstanding MA Thesis (College)

VIII. Financial Support

Most students are admitted to the program without being offered financial support. Other students' studies are funded by organizations external to the university. Depending on available funding, the School may offer a small number of Graduate Teaching Assistantships to first- and second-year students. Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) are generally expected to support faculty members in a variety of ways in their teaching efforts. Assignments may vary by semester. Most GTAs are funded by university tuition waivers and school funds. Occasionally, additional students are funded or partially funded by external grants, and the student on these lines will primarily work with the faculty member holding the grant.

Students who are assigned to serve as GTAs must complete all necessary paperwork and training in a timely matter and follow the Graduate Admissions Coordinator's directions. Students are also encouraged to register early for classes in time to process tuition waivers. Support from the school will cover no more than the minimum hours required for the students to complete their degree; if the student takes additional hours, no support will be provided for these additional hours. To be employed and to maintain employment in a graduate position, the student must be enrolled full time and meet all the training requirements and/or conditions of employment. Master's students can be offered tuition support for a maximum of four semesters excluding summer semesters.

Students are strongly encouraged to apply to [fellowships available from the university](#) as well as from outside sources for financial support.

GTA Training Requirements

If the student is hired in the position of [Graduate Teaching Associate, Assistant or Graders](#), there are training requirements that must be met for the contract to be processed. Associates and Assistants must complete a minimum two-day training and an online GTA Policies and Procedures Module. Associates must also have completed at least 18 hours of graduate courses in the discipline they will be teaching. Students who are employed as Graders are required to complete the online legal module. These services are offered by the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning (FCTL). Students are also expected to attend professional development such as the [FCTL's GTA workshops](#), which all students can apply for regardless of whether they receive an assistantship or not.

GTA Training (mandatory for employment as a GTA) provides information and resources for students who will be instructors in a two-day workshop. The seminars cover a variety

of topics, including course development, learning theories, lecturing, and academic freedom. Those interested in additional training can also attend an optional training session that normally follows the mandatory training.

GTA Teaching Certificate (12-weeks for domestic students, 16-weeks for international students) consists of group and individualized instruction by Faculty Center staff and experienced UCF professors. Textbooks and materials are provided, and a stipend is offered to current UCF students who complete the certificate. International students are provided the same training as well as information regarding language immersion and cultural awareness as a way of knowing what to expect from American students.

International students who will be hired in GTA positions must be proficient at speaking English. This is determined by successfully passing the English Speaking Test. This test (also known as the Oral Proficiency Exam) is administered by UCF's English Language Institute. More information including the minimal score requirements is available [here](#).

Several types of employment are available to international students, including on-campus employment. For more information about the types of employment available to international students, and the requirements and restrictions based in visa-type, please consult [UCF Global](#).

GTA Performance Appraisal

At the completion of each semester the student is employed as a GTA, the student's performance will be evaluated by the faculty advisor. Continuing financial support is conditional on satisfactory performance, as well as availability of funds. These assessments will be also used to review strengths and weaknesses in the student's performance in preparation for future employment.

IX. Forms and Procedures

Included below is information about several forms that will be useful to the student while they are completing their coursework. In addition to websites where the forms can be found, procedures for filing each of these forms are also outlined. Many of these forms can be found [here](#).

Transfer Request Form

For transfer courses to be requested for use in a UCF degree, the official transcripts from the institution where the courses were taken must be sent to UCF's Division of Graduate

Studies. In addition to the form, supporting documentation from the program must include a memo that gives approval for courses to be transferred and where credit should be applied in the Program of Study.

Traveling Scholar Form

If a student would like to request permission to enroll in a graduate course at another institution, this form must be submitted to the College of Sciences Coordinator of Graduate Services prior to the start of classes for the semester of enrollment. Once the coursework is completed, official transcripts from the institution where the courses were taken must be sent to UCF's Division of Graduate Studies.

Time Conflict (*College Form*)

If a registration attempt results in a time conflict between two courses, for the student to be registered, this form must be completed. This form accompanies the override of the course they are into which they are unable to register. This form is submitted to the College of Sciences Coordinator of Graduate Services for approval and course enrollment.

Non-thesis Research Paper Request Form (*School Form*)

If the student intends complete the non-thesis option, students must secure approval of two faculty readers. The form is available from the Graduate Admissions Coordinator.

Thesis Committee Approval Form (*College Form*)

Thesis committees must be in place and approved by the Graduate Program Coordinator, the School Director/MA Program Coordinator, and Graduate Studies prior to a student's enrollment into Thesis (XXX6971). Committee Composition:

- Chair (Requirements: regular* school faculty, terminal degree)
- Minimum of three committee members (Requirements: terminal degree or appropriate discipline recognition)
- At least two must be regular* faculty in student's school
- Majority UCF faculty

*Regular school faculty are tenured or tenure earning faculty or research faculty with permanent appointments; and can include joint appointments but not courtesy joint appointments.

Graduate Petition Form

Requests for exceptions to college or university policies are made by petition. The petition process includes both student and program required documentation prior to its receipt in the College of Sciences Graduate Office. In addition to the Graduate Petition Form, the student must supply their program with a clear statement of what exactly is being requested, why it is being petitioned and rationale for support.

If at any point the petition is denied, the student is given the option of having the petition considered at the next level; however, the Graduate Council provides the final decision regarding petitions. Denials at any level are accompanied with a written explanation.