



UC Irvine

Department of Civil and
Environmental Engineering

Civil and Environmental Engineering Graduate Student Handbook

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E4130 Engineering Gateway

Welcome to Your Graduate Journey with the Civil and Environmental Engineering Department!

Congratulations on embarking on this exciting chapter of your academic career. We understand that graduate school can be challenging, but remember, you're not alone. Our program has a strong track record of graduating successful students, and we're here to support you every step of the way.

Throughout your graduate studies, you'll find that campus resources can be incredibly helpful. If you ever feel overwhelmed or stressed, please don't hesitate to reach out for support. The [Counseling Center](#) is available to provide assistance, and their services are free for students. You can contact them at (949) 824-6457.

We believe in your success and are here to help you navigate this journey. Best of luck, and remember that support is always available!

You may access an electronic copy of the Civil and Environmental Engineering (CEE) Student Handbook: <https://engineering.uci.edu/dept/cee/academics/graduate>, and the SSoE Graduate Student Handbook: <https://graduate.eng.uci.edu/academics/policies-and-procedures>.

CEE Departmental Staff and Key Personnel

The Business office for the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering is in Engineering Gateway (EG) E4130

Professor Mo Li:	Department Chair (E4130 Engineering Gateway)
Professor Amir AghaKouchak:	Graduate Advisor for Hydrology/Water Resources (5400 Engineering Hall)
Professor Russell Detwiler:	Graduate Advisor for Environmental & Energy Systems (844C Engineering Tower)
Professor Michael Hyland:	Graduate Advisor for Transportation Systems (4022 Anteater Instruction & Research Building)
Professor Farzin Zareian:	Graduate Advisor for Structures/Geotechnics/Materials (E4145 Engineering Gateway)
Lorrie Josenhans:	Chief Administrative Officer (E4130 Engineering Gateway) Department Manager
Sergio Carnalla:	Laboratories Manager (148B Engineering Lab Facility) <i>Laboratories Manager for CEE labs and teaching labs.</i>
Jasmine Garcia:	Payroll & Personnel Coordinator (E4130 Engineering Gateway): Assists with TA, Grader, and GSR appointments, all aspects of payroll.
Gina Cho:	Graduate Coordinator (E4142 Engineering Gateway): Advises graduate students and provides student services. Coordinator for all graduate forms and academic procedures; degree process; and Department, School, and University policies and procedures concerning student milestones for CEE academic programs.
Jennifer Miller:	Business Office Analyst (E4130 Engineering Gateway): Assists with key requests, conference rooms reservations, Seminars and Department Administration. CEE@UCI Affiliates Coordinator.

Communication: The faculty, staff, and instructors in the Department and School use email as a primary means of communication – and will regularly send important messages to your UCI email address. It is expected that you will check this daily.

Desks are provided by research advisors for full-time PhD students conducting research. The CEE Student Commons is in AIRB 1010. Computer access is provided in various computer labs across the campus, including Engineering Tower, MSTB, and the Engineering Trailer:
<https://laptops.eng.uci.edu/computer-labs>.

The four CEE focus areas for both MS and PhD are: Environmental & Energy Systems (Advisor: Prof. Russ Detwiler); Hydrology/Water Resources (Advisor: Prof. Amir AghaKouchak); Transportation Systems (Advisor: Prof. Michael Hyland); and Structures, Geotechnics and Materials (Advisor: Prof. Farzin Zareian).

MS Degree General Requirements: Students entering the PhD program directly, but have not yet completed an MS, are required to earn an MS along the way to their PhD.

1. The **Plan of Study** for both the Thesis and Course Work options must be developed in consultation with the student's Faculty Advisor and approved by the CEE Program Graduate Advisor by the end of the first quarter of enrollment. Timely submission of the Plan of Study is necessary to receive email alerts regarding the graduation process and deadlines. Submit the Plan of Study form to the Graduate Coordinator to send out via DocuSign for approvals.
2. Complete 3 quarters of CEE 295: Seminars in CEE.
3. Discuss with your advisor early on whether the Thesis or Course Work option best suits your interests. Students in the MS/PhD track may select either option. Students interested in the Thesis option are required to first identify a Faculty Advisor.
4. Advancement to Candidacy at least **one quarter prior to graduating**. Please contact the CEE Graduate Coordinator to initiate the MS Advancement form via DocuSign on your behalf. The Department **must receive forms at least two weeks prior** to the [campus deadline](#).
 - a. [MS Advancement Form \(Course Work option\)](#)
 - b. [MS Advancement Form \(Thesis option\)](#)
5. Complete the course requirements (see below under Options 1 & 2).
6. Submit the [MS Exit Survey](#) during your last quarter.

Department Policy on Reduced Fee Part-Time Study or Filing Fee Petitions: As part of the approval process, your committee must review a draft of your thesis **prior** to the Program Graduate Advisor making a decision on your Part-Time or Filing Fee request. You will need to submit the petition and an electronic draft of your thesis to the Graduate Coordinator at least two weeks prior to the [campus deadline](#).

Please contact the CEE Graduate Coordinator to initiate the Filing Fee form on your behalf.

Visit the UCI Registrar's website for more information on how to electronically submit a [Part-Time Study request](#).

Option 1: MS Degree with Thesis (original research with an advisor and a written MS thesis)

- The Thesis option requires completion of 48 units of study.

- Of the 48 units, a minimum of 28 units must be in non-research, graduate-level approved engineering or related courses (numbered 200–292).
- A maximum of 10 MS Thesis Research units (CEE 296) can be taken for study in conjunction with the Thesis research topic. Upon approval of the Program Graduate Advisor, the maximum of 10 units of thesis research can be extended to 16 units.
- The remaining units may be earned as graduate-level course work, individual research, or upper-division undergraduate units (maximum ten units).
- Please review your focus area Plan of Study for any possible core courses.
- The committee must include 3 members (including your advisor) with at least 2 faculty members who hold a primary or joint appointment in the [CEE Department](#). Your Plan of Study must include all 3 signatures of your committee members, or you can submit confirmation emails of each member agreeing to serve on your committee to the CEE Graduate Coordinator. Please confirm your committee with the Graduate Coordinator and request that the **MS Advancement form** be initiated on your behalf **at least two weeks prior** to the [campus deadline](#).
- During your last quarter, contact the CEE Graduate Coordinator to initiate the **Master's Thesis/Signature Page** DocuSign form on your behalf **at least two weeks prior** to the [campus deadline](#). You will provide a copy of your thesis for the Department Graduate Advisor to review before signing the final degree paperwork.
- Pay a \$55 [Master's Thesis Submission fee](#). You must attach a copy of the electronic receipt to your DocuSign Master's Thesis/Signature Page form before you can submit the form. Without the receipt, the form is considered incomplete.
- References must be formatted *consistently* throughout the thesis using a standard reference format. APA style is the recommended format, but alternative standard formats may be used with the approval of your research advisor. [Final degree paperwork and additional instructions on submitting the Thesis](#).

Option 2: MS Degree with Course Work (also referred to as Comprehensive Exam Option)

- The course work option requires completion of 48 units of study, at least 40 of which must be in non-research graduate-level approved engineering or related courses (numbered 200–292).
- The remaining units may be earned as graduate-level course work, individual research, or upper-division undergraduate units (maximum ten units).
- Please review your focus area Plan of Study for any possible core courses.
- One quarter prior to graduating, contact the CEE Graduate Coordinator to initiate your **MS Advancement form at least two weeks prior** to the [campus deadline](#).
- During your last quarter, contact the CEE Graduate Coordinator to initiate your **MS Final Degree/Conferral form at least two weeks prior** to the [campus deadline](#).

PhD Degree General Requirements: Students entering the PhD program directly, but have not yet completed an MS, are required to earn an MS along the way to their PhD.

PhD students must maintain full time status each quarter throughout the duration of their program. A minimum of 12 units per quarter (Fall, Winter, and Spring) is considered full time. The following bullet points describe the basic information pertaining to our PhD program.

- The detailed program of study for each PhD student is formulated in consultation with a faculty advisor (a.k.a. the research advisor) who takes into consideration the objectives and preparation of the candidate.
- Students are expected to regularly attend the CEE seminar series on Fridays and must enroll in and successfully complete at least one unit of CEE 295 (Seminars in CEE) per year during their PhD studies.
- There are no specific course requirements. The School maintains specific guidelines that outline the milestones of a typical doctoral program: advancement
 1. The PhD Preliminary Exam is the first general exam on your path to a PhD degree (see below).
 2. The PhD Qualifying Exam (advancement to candidacy) is the second general exam on your path to a PhD degree (see below).
 3. A written dissertation with an Oral Defense is the final exam on your path to a PhD degree (see below).

Preliminary Exam

The Preliminary Exam is an important milestone for the PhD program and will be administered in the final weeks of Fall and Spring quarter each academic year. Students must register for the Preliminary Exam by completing and submitting the [CEE preliminary exam form](#) to the Graduate Coordinator at least 5 weeks prior to the beginning of the examination period. The Graduate Coordinator will send an email announcing the dates of the exam period at the beginning of the Fall and Spring quarters.

Purpose: The Preliminary Exam assesses whether the PhD Candidate possesses a sufficient understanding of the fundamental material and concepts essential for conducting scholarly research in their chosen research focus area. In addition, the candidate must show the ability to synthesize different elements of knowledge to solve open-ended problems and exhibit a capability for sound scientific reasoning. It is expected that the student has proficiency in oral English at the time of the exam.

- All PhD students, including MS/PhD students, are required to take the Preliminary Exam prior to the end of the 4th quarter of study.
- The Preliminary Exam is oral in all areas except Transportation Systems, which is written only.
- Passage of the Preliminary Exam is required to demonstrate satisfactory progress towards degree completion and to be eligible for the Qualifying Exam. If the Preliminary Exam is not taken by the end of the 4th quarter, students will no longer be considered as making Satisfactory Progress (See [Engineering Graduate Student Handbook](#)).
- Students are responsible for coordinating the Exam date and time with their committee members. Please contact the Graduate Coordinator to reserve a conference room for the Exam.
- **Grading:** To pass the Preliminary Exam, the student must have the unanimous passing vote of the Exam Committee. If the student receives a no-pass decision from the Exam Committee, the student may petition to take the exam only one additional time. A successful petition requires the support of the student's advisor and all members of the Exam Committee. Moreover, the student is allotted 2 attempts to pass the Preliminary

Exam, and if the student fails to pass the exam in those 2 attempts, they may be academically disqualified.

Exam Committee: The Exam Committee includes a minimum of three faculty members affiliated with the Civil and Environmental Engineering department. The Graduate Advisor for each focus area appoints the Exam Committee Chair for the focus area, who serves as chair for all preliminary exams during a single academic year. The student, in consultation with their primary research advisor (or focus-area graduate advisor if the student does not yet have a research advisor), selects at least two additional committee members, preferably faculty members from whom the student has taken at least one graduate course. None of the committee members may be the student's primary research advisor, who is excluded from participating in the exam. In the event the student's primary research advisor is serving as the Exam Committee Chair, the Graduate Advisor for the focus area will appoint an *ad hoc* Chair for the student's exam.

Oral Exam Format: This is a 75-minute oral exam in which the candidate presents a critical review of a peer-reviewed research paper (15 minutes) and answers questions from the exam committee (60 minutes).

Critical review of research paper: The candidate, in consultation with their research advisor, selects a list of three research papers, includes them on the CEE Preliminary Exam Form, and provides PDF files of the selected papers. These papers should each present a focused scientific study in the general area of the student's likely PhD research. They should be full-length, peer-reviewed papers in respected (high-impact) journals in the field. The list of papers should avoid short 'letter'-type articles and review papers. In addition, none of the authors of the publication should be current or former members of the candidate's research group. The Preliminary Exam Committee then selects one of these papers and notifies the candidate of the selected paper at least 4 weeks prior to the start of the exam period.

The student begins the exam with a 15-minute presentation that provides a critical review of the research paper. The presentation should describe the scientific objectives of the study, the approach used to meet the objectives, and the important conclusions of the study. In addition, the candidate should address why the study is important and novel with respect to previous supporting research, suggest possible improvements of the work, and identify important outstanding scientific questions raised by the study.

Question and answer period: The candidate will answer questions from the committee (60 minutes), which will include a combination of questions related to the presented research paper and foundational material from courses identified by the student. These questions will be aimed at assessing the student's ability to apply their understanding of foundational principles to formulating and addressing research questions.

Starting Spring 2025 Preliminary Exam for Structures/Geotechnics/Materials:

- The Preliminary Examination Committee will comprise three faculty members affiliated with the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, with at least two members specializing in Structures/Geotechnics/Materials.

- The committee will select its Chair from among its members. In consultation with their primary research advisor, the student will choose the committee members, ideally selecting faculty with whom they have completed at least one graduate-level course.
- Students are responsible for coordinating the date and time of the Exam with their committee members. Please contact the Graduate Coordinator to reserve a conference room for the Exam.
- The student's primary research advisor must attend the Preliminary Exam, either as a committee member or a non-voting attendee.
- To pass the Preliminary Exam, the student must receive a unanimous passing vote from the Preliminary Examination Committee. If the student does not pass, they may petition to retake the exam one additional time. A successful petition requires the support of the student's advisor and all members of the Preliminary Examination Committee. Students are allowed two attempts to pass the Preliminary Exam; failure to pass in both attempts may result in academic disqualification.
- The exam will be oral and will have a duration of no longer than 90 minutes. The candidate will answer questions from the committee based on foundational material from courses identified by the student.

Starting Spring 2025 Preliminary Exam for Transportation Systems:

Transportation System Engineering (TSE) students will not take the oral component of the Preliminary Examination. The TSE Preliminary Examination will include five components.

The first four components of the TSE Preliminary Examination will evaluate students on their foundational knowledge in (i) mathematics and statistics; (ii) networks, operations research, and probability modeling; (iii) traffic flow theory and traffic control; (iv) travel demand, transport economics, and transportation planning. These written exams will be based, in part, on material from CEE 220A, 221A, 223, 224A, 226A/229A, 228A, and 283. The questions are all multiple choice. Students will take these components of the exam in person and will have 90 minutes to complete each component. These components of the exam will be closed-book and closed-note.

The fifth component of the TSE Preliminary Examination will evaluate students on their creativity and ability to conduct independent research. Students will draft a proposal on a timely topic in the field of transportation. Students will receive a prompt to which they will need to respond. They cannot bring any documents to the exam. Students will draft their proposal in a quiet room with either (i) an exam booklet and a writing instrument, or (ii) a loaner computer with only relevant software enabled. The proposals will be graded anonymously by at least three CEE faculty members based on a predefined rubric. Each student's final score will be an average of the faculty members' scores. Students will have four hours to complete the proposal.

The TSE Preliminary Examination will be administered by the Transportation Area's graduate advisor or their designee.

Students are responsible for coordinating the date and time of the Preliminary Exam with the Transportation Area graduate advisor or their designee.

To pass the Preliminary Exam, a student must earn a passing grade (60%) on each of the five components of the exam.

Students are allowed two attempts to pass the Preliminary Exam; failure to pass in both attempts may result in academic disqualification from the CEE PhD program. Students only need to retake the components of the exam that they failed the first time.

Qualifying Exam

- The Qualifying Exam covers dissertation ideas and results of preliminary research.
- The committee must consist of at least 4 members.
 - At least 3 members, *including the Chair*, must hold a tenure-track faculty appointment or a current [joint appointment](#) within your home department. Your research advisor will serve as the Chair of your exam committee.
 - One member must be an outside member, which is defined as “a member of the Irvine Division of the UC Academic Senate, who does not hold a primary appointment in the student’s department or academic unit”.
 - All committee members must hold a Ph.D.

Note: For each committee, only **one** exception request will be considered. Exceptions could include an adjunct professor serving on the committee. In the case of an exception request, the department must turn in an exception memo and a copy of the professor’s CV with this form to get this approved. Please work with your Department Graduate Coordinator to request an exception.

- The Qualifying Exam is taken after passing the Preliminary Exam and typically by the end of the second year in the PhD program. It is expected the Qualifying Exam will be taken no less than one year before graduation. A written research proposal must be submitted to the committee members at least one week prior to the exam. The recommended format is a 15-page narrative (supplemental material may be included as an appendix).
- The exam will take 2-3 hours – your research presentation should be 40-50 minutes and reviewed by your advisor before your exam.
- Students must register for the Qualifying Exam at least two weeks prior to the examination date. Submit the [Nomination of Ph.D. Qualifying Examination Committee Form](#) to the Graduate Coordinator at least two weeks prior to the examination.
- Students are responsible for coordinating the Exam date and time with their committee members. Please contact the Graduate Coordinator to reserve a conference room for the Exam.
- Contact the Graduate Coordinator to initiate the **PhD Advancement to Candidacy Form** via DocuSign on your behalf **at least two weeks prior** to the [campus deadline](#).

I. Research Proposal

The Research proposal must be reviewed and signed off by your research advisor before it is distributed to the other committee members. The Research Proposal must be distributed to the committee members at least one week prior to the scheduled Oral Presentation. The Proposal

should use Times New Roman 11-or 12-point font or equivalent and be 1.5 line or double-spaced. A suggested outline follows:

- 1) Title Page: Title, Name of Student, Degree Program, Date, Advisor's Name, and Advisor's Signature.
- 2) Abstract Page: Approximately 200-word Summary – include the new information/new understanding that the dissertation will provide
- 3) Introduction: Rationale for this research, engineering context, why important, what key questions will be answered.
- 4) Research Hypotheses and Objectives: List of major research accomplishments to be completed during the course of the dissertation research. Typically, 3-5 in number.
- 5) Background: Summaries of prior published research key and relevant papers should be discussed to demonstrate a knowledge of the current state of the field.
- 6) Preliminary Results: Summary work to date, including interpretation of data obtained by the PhD candidate. Include figures, graphs, and tables, and the development of any models.
- 7) Proposed Research: Thorough exposition of the experiments / modeling/ theory/ computation the student plans to complete and how these will provide critical information for the dissertation and be an original, significant contribution to the research field.
- 8) Timeline: Provide an estimated timeline of when different experimental tasks will be completed.
- 9) Summary: Of fundamental contributions expected from this research.
- 10) References: Author's name, full title of articles, journal name, volume, page, year. References must be formatted *consistently* throughout the dissertation using a standard reference format. APA style is the recommended format, but alternative standard formats may be used with the approval of your research advisor.

The typical Research Proposal is 15 pages, including Figures and Tables. Document length does not necessarily correlate with quality. While it is likely that the research plan will evolve as the research progresses, the proposed research plan presented in the Qualifying Examination should be comprehensive and commensurate with the general expectation for the PhD. This document will serve as the basis for the PhD dissertation and will save time later when writing the dissertation.

PhD Oral Defense

- A 45–60-minute oral presentation that summarizes your major research findings is required at the completion of your PhD dissertation.

- The committee must be composed of 3 members with at least 2 faculty that hold a primary or joint appointment in the [CEE Department](#). Your research advisor will serve as the Chair on your exam committee.
- The oral exam will involve questions from the committee. The committee may request a closed session for their questions.
- It will be best if the written dissertation has been approved by the committee prior to the exam.
- Students are responsible for coordinating the Exam date and time with their committee members. When scheduling the exam be sure to consider the PhD Final Degree Paperwork [campus deadline](#). The Department **must receive forms at least two weeks prior** to the [campus deadline](#).
- Please confirm your committee members and defense schedule with the Graduate Coordinator at least two weeks prior to your exam. If needed, the Graduate Coordinator can reserve a conference room for the exam.
- Contact the Graduate Coordinator to initiate the **PhD II Final Degree Form** via DocuSign **at least two weeks prior** to the [campus deadline](#).
- Note: Department faculty members, graduate students and visitors are invited to attend. Make sure to contact the Graduate Coordinator at least two weeks prior to your exam to finalize the announcement.
- Submit Dissertation to [Library Archives](#).
- References must be formatted *consistently* throughout the dissertation using a standard reference format. APA style is the recommended format, but alternative standard formats may be used with the approval of your research advisor.
- [Additional final degree paperwork and instructions on submitting the Dissertation](#)

Dissertation

- Copies of dissertations are available in the UCI Library. [Formatting manual and guidelines](#).
- Students must submit an electronic copy to the Department (email pdf to Grad Coordinator).

Department Policy on Reduced Fee Part-Time Study or Filing Fee Petitions: As part of the approval process, your committee must review a draft of your dissertation **prior** to the Program Graduate Advisor making a decision on your Part-Time or Filing Fee request. You will need to submit the petition and an electronic draft of your dissertation to the Graduate Coordinator at least two weeks prior to the [campus deadline](#).

Please contact the CEE Graduate Coordinator to initiate the Filing Fee form on your behalf.

Visit the [UCI Registrar’s website](#) for more information on how to electronically submit a Part-Time Study request.

Satisfactory Progress

Graduate students must meet all of the following criteria to maintain satisfactory progress:

- Maintain at least a 3.0 cumulative GPA.

- Advance to candidacy and complete the degree within limitations established by UCI's Graduate Council.
- Receive grades of B or better.
- Enroll in at least 12 graduate or upper-division units of credit each quarter, including credit for supervised teaching and research, unless part-time status or an academic leave of absence has been approved in advance by the Graduate Dean. In cases of approved part-time status, enrollment in eight or fewer units of credit toward the degree is expected each quarter.
- Satisfactory progress towards the degree as determined by the student's faculty advisor, committee, or CEE program as described above for the MS and PhD degree programs.
- Graduate students must maintain satisfactory academic progress to be eligible for any academic appointment/employment, fellowship support, or other awards.

Events Triggering Automatic Placement on Academic Conditional Status

- A graduate student's grade point average for any term is less than 3.0, calculated on all of the letter graded upper division and graduate courses completed while registered as a graduate student at the University of California.
- A graduate student's cumulative grade point average is less than 3.0, calculated on all of the letter graded upper division and graduate courses completed while registered as a graduate student at the University of California.
- A graduate student earns a grade of B- or lower in a course.
- A graduate student accumulates a combination of more than eight units of "I," "U," and/or "F" grades in total.

Events That May Lead to Placement on Academic Conditional Status

- Failure to make satisfactory progress in research or coursework (e.g. failing the preliminary exam, not advancing to candidacy, not passing a language requirement, or not having an advisor).
- Failure to complete the degree within the approved maximum time.
- Unsatisfactory progress towards the degree as determined by the student's faculty advisor and CEE Graduate Advisor.

Notice of Placement on Academic Conditional Status

At the time of placement on Academic Conditional Status, the CEE program will provide the student with written notification. This letter will provide specific information on areas that require improvement, provide an outline and a timeline for future expectations of academic progress, and set meeting dates to maintain continuity in advisement. The purpose of the notice of potential unsatisfactory progress is to provide the student with a period of time (usually at least one academic quarter) in which to make necessary improvements in their academic status and successfully complete their graduate study.

Advisors

MS students taking the Course Work option do not need an advisor other than the focus area graduate advisor. MS students selecting the Thesis option should select an advisor as soon as possible. PhD and MS/PhD students should match with a research advisor during the first quarter of study to demonstrate satisfactory progress in the program. Before the end of their first quarter, PhD students contact the Graduate Coordinator to initiate the **Ph.D Faculty Research Advisor Verification Form**. Advisors shall provide written research expectations for each student enrolling in research units under their supervision for each quarter. Assessment of student

performance at the end of each quarter should be consistent with the expectations defined at the beginning of the quarter.

Continuing students who are switching advisors (for any reason) must match with a new faculty research advisor no later than the end of the subsequent quarter (excluding summer term) to continue making satisfactory progress towards degree completion. During the period the student is searching for a new advisor, the CEE program advisor will serve as the advisor of record. Once a student has matched with a faculty research advisor, they must contact the Graduate Coordinator to initiate the **Ph.D. Faculty Research Advisor Verification Form**. Provide the name of the matched faculty advisor and the effective quarter and year.

A faculty member who wishes to terminate their advising role must provide at least a two-month notice to the student to allow time for them to seek a new advisor. In extreme cases (as determined by the CEE Graduate Committee), an advisor can terminate their advising role, effective immediately, and the program graduate advisor will assume the role of the advisor for that student. If this termination of advisor/advisee relationship results in termination of funding for the student, then the CEE Graduate Committee will make all efforts to use CEE Departmental resources to continue the same level of support for the two-month period in which the student is identifying a new advisor.

A new Ph.D. Faculty Advisor Verification Form is needed anytime a student makes a change to his/her advisor for any reason. Please note that students are required to inform both their department/program Graduate Coordinator and the Graduate Student Affairs Office at the point of leaving the original lab, so that guidance on matching with a new advisor can be given.

Means of Support

- All support is given competitively, and based on continuous satisfactory progress
- Department Fellowships (usually awarded to new students for recruitment)
- GSR – Research Assistantships, funded from faculty research grants
- Hours worked are in ADDITION to units earned for research credit
- All U.S. citizens & Permanent Residents must fill out the [FAFSA](#) each year to be eligible for funding.
- Additional funding details can be found at [UCI Graduate Division Fellowships](#) and [UCI CEE Financial Support](#)

What do Teaching Assistants and Graders Do?

- TAs grade homework and tests, run demonstrations, hold office hours, lead discussions, maintain class websites, maintain records of grades, and run labs.
- Graders grade homework and tests and can also hold office hours.
- Students are selected based on faculty nominations, match with course material, past experience, etc.
- All students must complete the [TA Professional Development Program](#) in order to be eligible to TA (training session once per year in early September).
- [Additional information on TA Academic Qualifications](#)

What are the Language requirements for international students who want to serve as a TA?

- All graduate students, except those who have earned an undergraduate degree from an institution at which English was the **sole** language of instruction according to the [World Higher Education Database](#), must pass one of the following English Proficiency exams in order to qualify to serve as a TA:
 - ☐ A TOEFL iBT score of 26 or higher on the speaking component, **or** a score of 8 in the speaking component of the IELTS.
 - ☐ [UCI TOEP Exam](#): Minimum score of 5 for passing
- [Classes offered through ESL](#) can help prepare graduate students for these exams and improve communication skills.

What grades do I need to have to maintain satisfactory progress?

- Students must have a 3.0 GPA minimum with no grades below a B to show satisfactory progress. MS/PhD and PhD students are generally expected to achieve GPAs greater than 3.5. Students must receive a B or higher in a course for it to count toward their degree requirements. You need to have a GPA higher than 3.2 for certain types of fellowships, and a GPA higher than 3.1 for any TA position.
- **P/NP Grade Option** – no courses graded “Pass” are to be included as part of the advanced degree program, nor are they to be considered as satisfying academic criteria for fellowships and academic appointments/employment.
- **Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory (S/U)** - A grade of Satisfactory (S) is equivalent to a grade of B (3.0) or better. No credit is given for a course in which a grade of Unsatisfactory (U) was assigned. You cannot self-elect S/U grading. The S/U grading is assigned by the instructor and may be assigned to all participants in a graduate course. Similarly, with the consent of the academic unit involved, individual study and research or other individual graduate work may be evaluated by means of the grades Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory.
- **Course Repetition** - Courses in which a grade below a B, or a grade of U, was received may be repeated only once. Only the most recently earned grades will be used in computing the student’s grade point average for the first eight (8) units of repeated graduate course work. Thereafter, both the earlier and later grades are averaged.

NOTE: When registering, your options listed include "grade" or "P/NP" only. Students taking graduate courses that offer an S/U option, and who wish to elect the S/U option, should select the "grade" option, and then make the necessary arrangements with the instructor. It is at the discretion of each individual faculty member to choose whether to utilize the letter scale (A, B, etc.) or the Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory (S, U) system when assigning grades for research classes.

It is very important that you discuss this option with your instructor. Do not assume the instructor will remember this option at the end of the quarter. Please make arrangements

for S/U grading well before grades are to be assigned. Moreover, grading is at the discretion of the advisor, including whether or not to approve your request for S/U grading.

How to Reach the Graduate Advisor?

- If your question involves paperwork or other administrative issues, please consult the CEE Graduate Coordinator, Gina Cho at gina.cho@uci.edu.
- The focus area Graduate Advisor handles academic and research matters while the CEE Graduate Coordinator handles administrative issues.
- If you have an academic issue to discuss, contact your [Graduate Advisor of your focus area](#) first via email to describe the issue and arrange for an appointment.

What should I do if I want to change my research advisor?

- Inform the graduate advisor of your focus area.
- Meet with your research advisor – if unable to do so, ask the graduate advisor of your focus area to speak with your advisor.
- Discuss with other faculty in the department about research projects.
- If you have been fully supported financially by your research advisor on a GSR, you can be required to finish up a project component (requiring no more than one extra quarter), before you can switch advisors.
- PhD and M.S./PhD students who want to change their research advisor must find and successfully match with a new advisor at the latest one quarter (Summer quarter not included) after they stop working with their previous advisor or they will fail to make satisfactory progress towards degree completion.
- Once matched with a new advisor, students must contact the Graduate Coordinator to initiate **PhD Faculty Research Advisor Verification form**. Provide the name of the matched faculty advisor and the effective quarter and year.

Can I switch to another degree program at UCI if I find my interests are better matched by another degree program?

- Yes, you can apply to other degree programs at UCI. However, if you are accepted and decide to change your degree program, you cannot apply for readmission to the CEE program after the start of the next academic quarter in your new degree program. All financial support from the department will be terminated if you change degree programs in midyear.

Questions?

CEE Graduate Coordinator

Gina Cho

gina.cho@uci.edu

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