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PART I. OBTAINING AND MAINTAINING MASTER’S STUDENT STATUS

In order to pursue graduate study at the University of Cincinnati, a student must hold a baccalaureate degree and provide official documentation of degree conferral. The student should have an official final transcript sent to the Graduate School, which displays degree certification. This is to be done prior to the start of the semester of matriculation.

Maintaining MASTER’S STUDENT STATUS student status is defined by the Graduate School as registering for the appropriate number of graduate credit hours per semester and making steady progress toward degree requirements. The Department of Geology has additional criteria for maintaining status to which the student is expected to adhere to the following criteria in order to obtain financial support from one academic year to the next:

- Take part in training applicable to graduate student success, including teaching, assisting with field work or field trips, and attending guest speaker presentations.
- Enroll in required coursework.
- Obtain acceptable grades in lecture and laboratory courses (see section I.ii below).
- Complete Graduate Assistant duties as assigned.
- Form a complete thesis committee by the end of the first semester in residence.
- Make satisfactory research progress as outlined by the principal advisor and thesis committee.
- Submit funding proposals on an annual basis.
- Submit an Annual Report each year.
- Meet with the Graduate Director and Academic Director on an annual basis to discuss progress.

If a student does not meet expectations set by the advisory committee and program, financial support may be revoked for a semester or academic year. The principal advisor and Graduate Director will draft a letter for the student stating the parameters that must be met in order for funding to be reinstated.

i. Graduate Credit Policies

Graduate credit can only be earned for those courses at the University of Cincinnati that are designated as graduate-level in the Schedule of Classes (6000-level or higher), or which have been approved in writing by appropriate program authority for inclusion in the curriculum. Students who have completed graduate work at other schools may petition the Graduate Director for transfer of credits earned elsewhere to be applied towards a graduate degree at the University of Cincinnati.

Each semester, a student receiving a Graduate Assistantship (i.e. receiving a stipend for serving as a Teaching Assistant or Research Assistant) must register for at least 12 graduate credit hours to be considered a full-time student. If the student would like to enroll in an undergraduate-level course, or would like to audit a graduate-level course, he or she may do so, as long as the student is also registered for 12 graduate credit hours. The student must not exceed 18 total credit hours (graduate, undergraduate, or audited) per semester.

A Master’s student is required to have at least 30 graduate credit hours completed in order to graduate. At least 20 hours must be derived from formal coursework, i.e. any course that receives a letter grade. Students are expected to complete all requirements for the degree in two years. If, due to extenuating circumstances, a student must continue in the program beyond two years, which is typically the maximum number of years funding is granted, the student must enroll for, and personally fund, at least one graduate credit per year in order to remain active. A student whose status has automatically terminated because of failure to register during an academic year will no longer be considered a graduate student but may seek reinstatement (https://grad.uc.edu/fac-staff/handbook/grad-status/time-degree/reinstatements.html). If a student remains inactive for three or more academic years, he or she must apply for readmission (https://grad.uc.edu/fac-staff/handbook/grad-status/time-degree/readmission.html). The student may seek reinstatement or readmission under the direction of his or her faculty advisor, Academic Director, and Graduate Director. Also note that students must register for at least one graduate credit hour during each semester (excluding summer semester) if they are using University resources such as libraries, University housing, campus laboratories, office space, equipment, recreational or computer facilities. The maximum time allowed by the Graduate School to complete all degree requirements is five years past matriculation into the program.
ii. Maintaining a Satisfactory GPA
A student must accumulate a grade point average (GPA) of at least 3.0 to obtain a Master’s degree at the University of Cincinnati. At least two-thirds of the minimum graduate credits for the degree must be at a level of B or higher. See the Graduate School Graduate Student Handbook (available at https://grad.uc.edu/student-life/policies.html) for information on final exams, grade reports, grades assigned to repeated research courses, pass/fail grades, and grade changes.

iii. Required Geology Courses
Each graduate student is required to enroll in the following courses: GEOL7025 Geology Colloquium (each semester), GEOL7005 Graduate Research (fall semester of first year of residence), GEOL7030 Four Day Field Trip (when offered), and at least one credit of the appropriate section of GEOL8005 Master’s Thesis Research. Students are also expected to enroll in lecture or lab courses in addition to these required courses. Each student should consult with his or her faculty advisor to determine what courses would be most beneficial.

iv. Graduate Student Annual Report and Meeting with Academic and Graduate Directors
This report serves as a summary of the academic and research accomplishments by the student over the course of the year. The report should be completed by the student with the help of his or her faculty advisor and committee members. The report form is sent to students via email at the beginning of fall term. The student’s faculty advisor must submit the completed report to the Graduate Director by April 1. It is the student’s responsibility to send his or her advisor the document well in advance of this deadline. Each student is also expected to meet with the Academic Director and Graduate Program Director to discuss his or her progress prior to the end of spring semester. Submission of a completed report and meeting with the directors are both required in order to obtain financial support for the following academic year (details of financial support can be found in Part III).

PART II. REQUIREMENTS FOR THESIS PREPARATION, COMPLETION, DEFENSE, AND GRADUATION

In addition to taking appropriate graduate-level courses and maintaining a satisfactory GPA, a Master’s student must complete and defend a thesis project under the supervision of a faculty advisor and support of an advisory committee in order to graduate with a Master’s degree. Students must choose a research project shortly after starting in the program. Steady progress on the project is necessary in order to graduate within the two-year time frame.

i. Principal Advisor, Advisory Committee, and Committee Meetings
**Students should have their advisory committee finalized by the end of the first semester in residence.** A student’s principal advisor will assist the student in choosing two individuals to serve on the committee. At least one member of the committee must be a faculty member of the University of Cincinnati Department of Geology. Faculty from other universities or government agencies who wish to serve on a student’s committee must be approved by the Graduate School (see the Academic Director for information).

Students are expected to meet with their entire committee at least once per semester. It is up to the student to initiate and organize this meeting. If a committee member cannot be physically present, effort should be made to include the member remotely, perhaps via Skype. The student will present a research proposal to their committee during the second semester in residence. This document should be a short summary of the proposed project, including hypothesis/question, background, methods, expected results, and timeline. At subsequent meetings, the student must provide the advisor and committee members with an outline before the meeting takes place describing what courses have been taken, participation in professional development or training, research progress, a draft of the thesis document, if applicable, and future research and writing plans, including details of upcoming field and/or lab work and associated costs. This information is then presented in more detail during the meeting. The student is to collect written feedback from the advisor and committee members and summarize this information in his or her Annual Report.
ii. Thesis Document
The Master’s thesis constitutes the approximate scope of at least one published paper and it is strongly encouraged that students submit their work for publication. Hence, emphasis should be placed on testing a well-defined hypothesis and/or thorough documentation of a single geologically-related problem. Ideally, theses should be formatted as manuscripts appropriate for submission to a particular journal (see instructions to authors on the journal’s website). Because journals favor relatively short articles rather than long, exhaustive documents, emphasis should be placed on concise writing and a central theme. Additional information, such as extensive datasets, should be appendices. The thesis will need to be further formatted following the guidelines of the Graduate School and submitted electronically to the Graduate School (see details in ETD Submission section) during the graduation process. The thesis must be submitted to the committee at least four weeks prior to a student’s planned defense date.

iii. Final Thesis Defense
In addition to producing a Master’s thesis document, a Master’s student must hold a final defense, which is a presentation summarizing the thesis research and results followed by questions from faculty, committee members, and fellow graduate students. The student should meet with his or her entire committee at least three weeks prior to the defense date. The purpose of this meeting is to ensure that the student is on track for graduating and that he or she has time to make any necessary adjustments to (1) the thesis before circulating it with the faculty at large, and (2) the final presentation. The student must announce the defense to geology faculty and fellow graduate students at least two weeks prior to the defense date. The student must also send his or her thesis to the faculty at large at least one week prior to the defense. Ideally, the defense will take place during the normal business day (9-5) when there are few class conflicts to allow faculty at other students to attend. See the Academic Director to secure a room in which to hold the defense.

The defense proceeds as follows:
1) The student is introduced by the Graduate Director, who also serves as the defense moderator, and the faculty advisor.
2) The student presents his or her research in a presentation lasting no more than 30 minutes.
3) The presentation is followed by a question and answer session. Anyone in the audience, including faculty, external committee members, and fellow graduate students, is free to ask questions.
4) Everyone other than the committee and departmental faculty leaves the room. The student’s presentation and ability to answer questions is discussed and a vote is made as to whether the student passes or fails the final defense.
5) The student is then immediately notified of the decision (he or she should remain nearby after the presentation).
6) If the student passes, he or she must gather the signatures of the principal advisor and committee members on the Committee Approval form, which is generated through the Graduation Checklist (https://grad.uc.edu/student-life/graduation.html).

iv. Master’s Program Time Table
Master’s students should adhere to the following timetable for completion of degree requirements, unless other arrangements have been agreed upon by the principal advisor and Graduate Director. Each student is strongly encouraged to complete his or her degree by the end of their fourth semester in residence. If a student does not make satisfactory research progress and/or meet requirements mandated by the faculty advisor and advisory committee during the first year, this may be grounds for termination of financial support for subsequent semesters. Faculty advisors are expected to help their students in meeting the requirements of this timeline.

If a student starts in the spring semester, he or she should modify the table below accordingly.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Fall Semester</th>
<th>Spring Semester</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>• Establish and finalize advisory committee.</td>
<td>• Submit funding proposals with spring deadlines (e.g. GSA and Sigma Xi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Present initial research summary and research plan to committee during first committee meeting.</td>
<td>• Meet with committee and present research proposal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Record progress, including details of committee meeting in the Annual Report.</td>
<td>• Finalize Annual Report and send it to faculty advisor for review. Report due to the Graduate Director by April 1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Submit any relevant funding proposals that may have fall deadlines (e.g. URC, NSF, GRFP)</td>
<td>• Meet with the Academic and Graduate directors to discuss progress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>• Submit funding proposals.</td>
<td>• Meet with committee to discuss thesis completion, defense, and graduation timeline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Report research and thesis progress to committee during committee meeting.</td>
<td>• If thesis is finalized, submit thesis document to advisor and committee for review and prepare for defense and graduation (see below).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Record details of committee meeting in the Annual Report.</td>
<td>• If thesis is not finalized, speak with advisor and committee about summer completion and graduation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Finalize Annual Report and send it to advisor. Report due to the Graduate Director by April 1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Meet with the Academic Director and Graduate Program Director to discuss thesis completion, defense, and graduation timeline.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A sample calendar that includes the dates for applying for graduation, thesis defense, and electronic thesis and dissertation (ETD) submission is provided at the end of this section.

v. Applying for Graduation and Document Submission

_The Graduation Process_

Before a student applies to graduate, he or she must confirm with the faculty advisor and advisory committee that he or she is indeed prepared to finalize the thesis document and defend within the given timeline. When the student is ready to apply for graduation, he or she must access the Graduation Checklist (https://grad.uc.edu/student-life/graduation.html), which includes the graduation application and steps required to complete the graduation process.

If a student is not prepared to graduate in the spring semester, he or she student may graduate during the summer semester with no additional tuition costs. The timeline calendar below can be modified to reflect the deadlines for summer term. If the student is not prepared to graduate in the summer, he or she must graduate during the following school year. The student is responsible for paying for one credit hour of GEOL8005 for fall semester in order to maintain active student status for the entire academic year.

_ETD (Electronic Thesis and Defense) Submission_

Once the thesis document has been finalized and the student has obtained the appropriate signatures on the Committee Approval form, he or she must submit the document to the Graduate School. It is highly recommended that the student defends at least one week prior to the ETD submission deadline to allow enough time to make final edits to the document and to format the document properly. Full details on ETD formatting and submission can be found on the Graduate School’s ETD Information website (https://grad.uc.edu/student-life/etd.html).

Below is a sample calendar displaying deadlines for Spring graduation application and ETD (Electronic Thesis and Dissertation) submission. Suggested dates for sending the finalized thesis document to the advisory committee and geology faculty have been added. Deadlines are mandated by the Graduate School and are subject to change. Be sure to verify deadlines for fall, spring, and summer graduation on the Graduate School’s Critical Dates and Deadlines webpage (https://gradapps.uc.edu/graduationdeadlines/graduation-deadlines.aspx).
vi. Requirements for Students Who Want to Switch to the PhD Program

If a student is interested in switching to the PhD program, he or she must discuss this with the primary advisor soon after starting at UC. A switch to the PhD program must be approved by the entire faculty by the end of the student’s second semester in residence. This tight timeline assures that students who switch programs will still be on target to complete their qualifying exam during their third semester in residence. If a student misses this deadline, he or she will complete a Master’s thesis and then reapply to the PhD program.

PART III. FINANCIAL SUPPORT

i. Stipend and Tuition Scholarship Overview

Most of the students in the graduate program receive financial support on an academic-year (12-month) basis in the form of a stipend and full tuition scholarship provided by the Department and University, though occasionally a student is self-funded through an external fellowship (e.g. NSF Fellowship) or traineeship (e.g. EPA traineeship). Financial support is limited to a maximum of two academic years for a M.S. student. The student may receive an additional semester or year of support if external funding, such as a grant, scholarship, or fellowship if obtained by the student or faculty advisor. Students who receive a stipend and tuition scholarship must be enrolled in full-time (i.e. registered for a minimum of 12 graduate credits each semester) and are expected to take part in training applicable to graduate student success, including teaching, assisting with field work or field trips, grant writing, and attending guest speaker presentations. Being awarded financial support beyond the first year is contingent upon making satisfactory research
progress, submitting grant proposals, enrolling in required coursework, obtaining acceptable grades in lecture and laboratory courses, and completing assigned Graduate Assistant duties.

ii. Stipend and Tuition Scholarship Information

Graduate Assistantship (GA)
A Graduate Assistantship provides a student with a 12-month stipend of $20,000 for the first year and a 9-month stipend of $15,000 for the second year in the program. Funding is for nine months in the second year because students are expected to complete and defend their thesis by the end of the spring semester. The stipend is paid in bi-weekly increments. A payment schedule and any specific stipend-related information is provided to students individually by the Academic Director prior to fall semester. Students and their advisors are encouraged to seek additional summer funding through a grant or fellowship (e.g. the University Research Council, which is outlined in more detail below).

There are two forms of Graduate Assistantships: A Teaching Assistantship and a Research Assistantship.

Teaching Assistantship (TA) – A TA is a professional academic appointment. Students receiving a teaching assistantship are expected to assist with teaching one or more classes or laboratory sections per semester. The expectation is that the recipient will gain useful experience as an instructor of Earth Science and improve his or her general communication skills. Graduate TAs are assigned to specific courses by the Academic Director, with direction from individual graduate students, the Graduate Director, and faculty. TAs are typically assigned to a variety of courses throughout their time in the program in order to provide a diverse teaching experience and to even out possible inequities in workload. Any questions about TA assignments should be brought to the attention of the Academic Director.

The Graduate School mandates that a TA can work no more than 20 hours per week. All work assignments should relate specifically to the course to which the TA is assigned. Teaching assistant duties may include:

- Preparation and presentation of lectures and laboratories in undergraduate courses.
- Assisting in the preparation of teaching materials for lecture and laboratories.
- Assisting in the preparation and proctoring of examinations.
- Assisting in the grading of exams, homework, and laboratory exercises.
- Assisting in audio-visual presentation of class materials.
- Assisting with activities during lectures or laboratories.
- Participating in field trips, which may occur outside of regularly-scheduled class time.
- Tutoring and advising students on a one-to-one basis.
- Maintaining regular office hours.

Research Assistantship (RA) – A student may be assigned as an RA if the student’s advisor has appropriate financial support, which is typically an external grant. RA duties involve lab or field work assigned by the faculty advisor related to the specific research project the grant is funding. The base stipend defined by the department ($20,000 for first year; $15,000 for second year) may be higher depending on the stipulations of the grant (e.g., faculty may be able to provide additional summer salary support). An RA should work no more than 20 hours per week.

Tuition Scholarship
A University-funded tuition scholarship is provided to students serving as TAs and RAs. The scholarship covers full-time tuition and most fees, with the exception of the Information Technology and Instructional Equipment (ITIE) fee, UC Student Health Insurance plan fee, and the International Student fee (for international students only), which are assessed each semester. A student who has waived student health insurance will pay only the ITIE fee of $184 per semester. A student who has enrolled in student health insurance will pay $561, which includes the $184 ITIE fee and the fee for student health insurance after the GSHI award (see below) has been applied. International students will pay an additional $125 per semester for the International Student fee.

iii. Additional Financial Assistance Sources

Graduate Student Health Insurance (GSHI) award - Students who enroll in the UC Student Health Insurance plan are strongly encouraged to apply for the Graduate Student Health Insurance (GSHI) award (https://grad.uc.edu/student-
life/awards/gshi.html), provided by the Graduate School. For the 2019-2020 academic year, the award provides $803 per semester to help defray the cost of student health insurance, which is $1,180 per semester. This reduces the cost of student health insurance to $377 per semester.

Departmental Funds for Research and Travel - The Department provides a one-time award of $350 to a Master’s student, which can be used for research-related travel, research supplies, or analytical costs. The Department also provides a $300 award per year to those students who are traveling to present at a professional meeting. Please see the Business Manager for detailed information on obtaining these funds.

Graduate Student Governance Association (GSGA) Awards and Fellowships – The GSGA provides awards of up to $500 per year for conference travel for both presenting and non-presenting students. They also provide excellence awards and research fellowships. More information is provided on their website, https://www.uc.edu/gsga.html.

University Research Council (URC) Fellowships – The University Research Council has a $5,000 award available for summer stipend ($4,000) and research support ($1,000) (http://webcentral.uc.edu/urc2/apply/programinfo.cfm)

Other Award Opportunities Provided by the Graduate School – The Graduate School has a website (https://grad.uc.edu/student-life/awards.html) devoted to the various University, College, and Graduate School awards available to graduate students, such as the Yates Scholarship, Provost Graduate Fellowship, and Excellence in Teaching awards.

External Funding Opportunities – Master’s students are encouraged to seek research and travel funding from a variety of external sources, including the Geological Society of America (GSA), American Association of Petroleum Geologists (AAPG), and Sigma Xi. It is important for a student to seek guidance from his or her faculty advisor and committee members as to which external funding sources are applicable to their research.

iv. Outside Employment
Stipend and tuition support is an investment made by the Department of Geology and the University of Cincinnati in its graduate students and their research with the understanding that the student’s focus will be devoted to the pursuit of his or her graduate degree. It is, therefore, expected that students will not hold outside employment while in residence at UC.

PART IV. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

i. General Departmental Duties
All students receiving financial support from the department may be called upon to carry out general departmental duties in addition to assigned TA and RA duties. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Assistance with weekly colloquia.
- Assistance with the annual Career Days.
- Meeting with alumni and other visitors to the department.
- Attending presentations given by visitors outside of scheduled colloquia.
- Attending thesis and dissertation defenses of fellow graduate students.
- Mentoring undergraduate students.

ii. Office Space
Active graduate students (i.e. those who are enrolled and receiving stipend and tuition funding) will be provided with office space. Each student is assigned office space by the Academic Director. A student may request a particular office location and the request will be fulfilled if possible. A student may remain in the same office space from one year to the next, but this is not guaranteed. Student are asked to respect their office space and keep their desk space tidy. If a student does not adhere to these expectations, office space privileges may be revoked.
iii. Keys
Each student who is actively working towards degree completion will be assigned keys. A student should only be in possession of the keys he or she is assigned and should not lend or give keys to another student. Students are assigned keys that gain access to the main office, classrooms, requested labs, and office space. Keys are ordered in the main office by the student worker or Academic Director. The student will be charged $20 per key through Catalyst if keys are not picked up within two weeks of being ordered or keys are lost and have to be reordered. Upon degree completion, all assigned keys are to be returned to Edwards Hall.

iv. Other Information Related to the University and Graduate School
The student is encouraged to view the Graduate Student Handbook (https://grad.uc.edu/fac-staff/handbook.html) provided by the Graduate School, which details University-level requirements and policies that apply to all graduate students at the University of Cincinnati.