Department of Geology
Doctoral Student Handbook

Revised Fall 2019

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PART I. OBTAINING AND MAINTAINING PHD 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 PhD student status is defined by the Graduate School as registering for the appropriate number of graduate credit hours per year 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 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 dissertation committee by the end of the second semester in residence.
- Make satisfactory research progress as outlined by the principal advisor and dissertation committee.
- Submit funding proposals on an annual basis.
- Complete a preliminary examination during the first half of his or her fourth semester in residence.
- Submit a manuscript for publication by the end of the third year in residence.
- 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 PhD student is required to complete at least 60 graduate credit hours beyond the Master’s degree, or 90 graduate credit hours beyond a Bachelor’s degree in order to graduate. Students are expected to complete all requirements for the degree in four years. If, due to extenuating circumstances, a student must continue in the program beyond four 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 nine 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 Doctor of Philosophy 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 Student Handbook (available at https://grad.uc.edu/student-life/policies.html) for information on final exams, grade reports, grades assigned for 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 in residence), GEOL7030 Four Day Field Trip (when offered), and at least one credit of the appropriate section of GEOL9001 PhD Dissertation Research (each semester). Students are also expected to take at least 12 credit hours of lecture- or lab-based courses during their first two years in residence. 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 and Graduate Director to discuss his or her progress prior to the end of the Spring Semester. Submission of a completed report and meeting with the directors are both required in order to obtain a stipend for the following academic year.

PART II. REQUIREMENTS FOR A DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY DEGREE

In addition to taking appropriate graduate-level courses and maintaining a satisfactory GPA, a PhD student must complete and defend a dissertation under the supervision of a faculty advisor and support of an advisory committee in order to graduate with a Doctor of Philosophy degree. Students will need to choose their research projects shortly after starting in the program. Steady progress on the dissertation is necessary in order to graduate within the four-year time frame.

i. Principal Advisor, Advisory Committee, and Committee Meetings
Students should begin establishing their advisory committee by the end of the first semester and finalize the committee by the end of their second semester in residence. A student’s principal advisor will assist the student in choosing at least four additional individuals to serve on the committee. At least two members of the committee (beyond the advisor) must be faculty members of the University of Cincinnati Department of Geology and at least one must be external to the department. 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 should 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 feedback from the advisor and committee members and summarize this information in his or her Annual Report.
ii. Advancing to Candidacy
Because the Ph.D. is primarily a research degree, the doctoral candidacy procedure for the Department of Geology places emphasis on evaluating the student’s preparation to conduct doctoral research. In order to advance to PhD candidacy, the student must prepare a research proposal and defend this initial research summary via a qualifying exam attended by his or her advisory committee and other interested geology faculty. The candidacy process serves several purposes:

- To determine if the student has the background necessary to carry out the proposed research.
- To inform the department of the student’s research interests. Based on this information, it is not uncommon for faculty outside of the student’s committee to find articles that are relevant to the student’s research or arrange personal contact with researchers who may be of help.
- To help the student with the design, structure and focus of the proposed research and ensure he or she understands the work it entails.
- To assist the student with formulating an accurate budget and discuss funding for the project.
- To provide the student and faculty with a schedule for research and completion of the requirements for a degree.
- To provide the student with an opportunity to draft proposal text that may be readily modified for submission to funding agencies.

Students should begin to formulate a research plan, in consultation with members of their advisory committee, by the end of the first semester in residence. In the following months, adequate time should be devoted to developing the background knowledge and expertise needed to conduct the planned research. Data collection in the field and/or laboratory and proposal submission to funding agencies, such as the Geological Society of America, Sigma Xi, and the American Association of Petroleum Geologists in the first year in residence is highly desirable.

Research Proposal
The research proposal should represent the student’s own original research and writing with input from the advisory committee. The proposal document should be modeled after a standard NSF proposal or equivalent (e.g., NASA). See the NSF Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide for information. The proposal document should be approximately 15 pages in length, single-spaced, with figures in the text and must include:

- A proposal summary – a one-page abstract describing the proposed research, explicitly addressing the NSF criteria of Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts.
- A statement of problem - the research problem being addressed should be succinctly defined in a paragraph.
- Background information, including a review of literature relevant to the project. This should demonstrate knowledge of topical literature, including recent and historical contributions.
- Intellectual Merit - The contribution and significance of the proposed research/significance of the problem - a discussion of why this particular problem warrants doctoral research.
- The research approach - how will the problem be approached? What field or lab work will be done? What data are required? Will special equipment be needed?
- Results of the pilot study or preliminary results.
- Broader Impacts – How does the project benefit science beyond the student’s specific field, or society in general, and how might its results be disseminated to the public?
- List of references cited (not included in 15 pages).
- Schedule of completion, including a research and writing timeline and presentation schedule.
- Budget justification, including current and pending sources of funding, and student stipend and tuition.
- A copy of the student’s CV (not included in 15 pages).

Once complete, the proposal must be circulated to, and approved by, the advisory committee at least four weeks in advance of the qualifying exam. At this time, each committee member will evaluate the proposal (see evaluation rubric in Appendix I at the end of this document) and share their feedback with the student. The final proposal must be emailed to the Geology Department faculty for review at least two weeks prior to the exam.

Qualifying Exam
The purpose of the qualifying exam is to assess if the candidate is prepared to conduct independent research at the Ph.D. level. This includes the specifics of the research project and all directly relevant background, as well as broader
context within the field of study. The student should approach the exam with the mindset of explaining and defending his or her research to a panel of trained scientists who are a mix of experts and non-experts in the student’s field.

**The candidacy exam should take place during the first half of the student’s fourth semester in residency.** The student should consult independently with committee members about their expectations and particular topics to study well in advance of the exam. A preliminary meeting with the entire advisory committee is required **at least three weeks prior to the exam.** The purpose of this meeting is to ensure that the student is preparing properly for the exam and can make any necessary adjustments to (1) the proposal before circulating it with the faculty at large, or (2) the presentation prior to the exam.

The exam will be attended by the student’s advisory committee, the Graduate Director, and other interested faculty from the Department of Geology. All faculty are welcome to attend and participate. The exam moderator is typically the current Graduate Director, but can be any active faculty member who is not currently on leave or a member of the student’s doctoral committee. The moderator will:
- Ensure that the exam is equitably administered.
- Ensure that all faculty present have the opportunity to ask questions if they wish.
- Direct a change in topic if a current line of discussion is becoming unproductive.
- Direct a change in breadth of questioning, e.g., if too much time has been spent on very proposal-specific questions and questions on broader context need to be visited.
- Read questions from committee members not able to attend the exam.
- Determine when the exam is concluded.
- Officially record the voting and recommendations of the faculty.

For the exam itself, the student will give a 20- to 30-minute presentation of the proposed research. This will be followed by questions from the attending members of the committee and faculty. Questioning should assess the following:
- Is the student proposing clearly defined, testable hypotheses or scientific questions?
- Will the approach(es) chosen sufficiently address these hypotheses or question(s)?
- Can the student do the research (does he or she have the technical skills and methodological background)?
- Can the student explain why he or she is doing the research (i.e. what is the scientific importance)?
- Can the student defend the research choices he or she has made (e.g., does he or she demonstrate familiarity with literature in the field, alternative approaches and explanations, potential confounding factors, etc)?
- Does the student demonstrate adequate knowledge of the basic physics/chemistry/biology of the systems he or she is studying and how they may change under differing conditions and through geologic time?
- Can the student place the research within a broader context of the Earth sciences?
- Has the student included appropriate safety measures?
- Are the budget and timeline realistic, and has the student already demonstrated effort to obtain funding?

When the questioning portion of the exam is complete, the student will leave the room to permit committee and faculty members to deliberate. All present for the exam will take a majority vote to determine whether the student passes, conditionally passes, or fails. If the student passes, he or she advances to Ph.D. candidacy and carries on with the proposed research under the supervision of the advisory committee. For a conditional pass, the Graduate Director and principal advisor will prepare a written report of the issues raised during the exam regarding the proposed research and provide recommendation for how those issues may be resolved. This summary is given to the student and the student’s advisory committee. If the committee and faculty ask the student to meet again for a formal resolution of the issues raised, the Graduate Director is responsible for seeing that the questioning be limited only to those issues raised during the initial candidacy exam and included in the report. Resolution of a conditional pass should be made before the end of the following semester. If the student fails the exam, he or she may be given the option to retake it by the end of the following semester. Failure of a second exam may result in dismissal from the graduate program, or the student may be given the option to complete a portion of the proposed research to earn a Master’s degree.
Once the student passes the candidacy exam, he or she should notify the Academic Director, who will submit the exam information into Catalyst. The student then receives a candidacy letter from the Graduate School.

iii. Dissertation Document
A dissertation represents significant original scholarship and serves as the primary product of doctoral research. There are two options for the document itself:

1. A traditional dissertation consisting of a single document with several chapters that includes consecutively numbered figures and tables interleaved with text and a single reference list at the end. There is no page limit for dissertations; emphasis should be placed on thorough, but concise text.

2. An alternative dissertation composed of a series of three or more manuscripts on a closely related theme, which are formatted as individual papers targeted for journals. The papers should be appropriate for submission to a refereed journal or edited book. Each paper will have its own abstract, separately numbered figures, and reference list. The journal/book targeted should be specified on each chapter (e.g., as a footnote on the first page) and the format for headings, references, figure captions, etc. must follow those of the designated publication.

Regardless of the format chosen, all dissertations should include a brief introductory chapter that outlines the broader goals/objectives and hypotheses tested, briefly summarizes each chapter, and discusses the overall goals and outcomes. Because it is important for a doctoral student to assemble a record of published scholarship, the Geology Department strongly encourages PhD students to consider the second option of dissertation preparation. This format of dissertation may also be preferable considering that in order to qualify for a fourth year of support, all PhD students must submit at least one paper to a referred journal or edited book prior to the end of their third year in residence. This paper should be considered an increment of the dissertation. Ideally, other papers should also be revised and accepted by peer-reviewed journals while the student is at UC. However, submission and publication of more than one manuscript is not required for completion of the dissertation or degree.

The dissertation document must be further formatted following the guidelines of the Graduate School and submitted electronically to the Graduate School (see details below in ETD Submission section) during the graduation process. The dissertation needs to be submitted to the committee at least four weeks prior to a student’s planned defense date.

iv. Final Dissertation Defense
In addition to producing a dissertation document, a Ph.D. student must hold a final defense, which is a presentation summarizing the dissertation 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 dissertation 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 dissertation to the faculty at large at least one week prior to the defense. Ideally, the defense will take place during normal business day (9-5) when there are few class conflicts to allow faculty and other students to attend. See the Academic Director to secure a room in which to hold the defense.

The final defense proceeds as follows:
1) The student is typically 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 45-50 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) After questioning ends, 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 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).

v. Ph.D. Program Time Table
Ph.D. students should adhere to the following time table 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 spring semester of the eighth semester in residence. If a student does not make satisfactory research progress and/or does not meet requirements mandated by the faculty advisor and advisory committee, this may be grounds for termination of financial support or ultimately dismissal from the program. Faculty advisors are expected to help their students meet this timeline.

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Fall Semester</th>
<th>Spring Semester</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>• Establish advisory committee. • Present a research plan to committee during first committee meeting. • Record progress, including details of committee meeting on the Annual Report. • Submit any relevant funding proposals that may have fall deadlines (e.g. NSF, GRFP)</td>
<td>• Finalize advisory committee. • Submit at least one funding proposal (e.g. GSA or Sigma Xi). • Report research and proposal progress to committee during committee meeting. • Finalize Annual Report and send it to faculty advisor for review. The advisor submits the report to the Graduate Director by April 1. • Meet with the Graduate and Academic directors for a degree progress check.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>• Meet with advisory committee to discuss the proposal and scheduling of the qualifying exam. Record details of the meeting on the Annual Report. • Meet with the Academic Director to schedule qualifying exam and confirm availability of Graduate Director. • Finalize proposal and send it to the advisory committee and other geology faculty following the required timeline.</td>
<td>• Hold qualifying exam (first half of semester). • Report research and dissertation progress to committee during committee meeting. • Finalize Annual Report and ensure it is submitted to the Graduate Director by April 1. • Meet with Graduate and Academic directors for a degree progress check.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>• Report research and writing progress to committee during committee meeting. • Update Annual Report • Prepare a manuscript for publication.</td>
<td>• Submit manuscript for publication. • Report research and writing progress to committee during committee meeting. • Finalize Annual Report and ensure it is submitted to the Graduate Director by April 1. • Meet with Graduate and Academic directors for a degree progress check and to discuss dissertation completion, defense, and graduation timeline.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>• Report research and writing progress to committee during committee meeting.</td>
<td>• Meet with committee to report research and writing progress. • If dissertation is finalized, submit document to advisor and committee for review and prepare for defense and graduation (see Section v below). • If dissertation is not finalized, speak with advisor and committee about summer completion and graduation. • Finalize Annual Report and ensure it is submitted to the Graduate Director by April 1.</td>
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A sample calendar that includes the dates for applying for graduation, dissertation defense, and electronic thesis and dissertation (ETD) submission is provided at the end of Section vi.

vi. 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 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 GEOL9001 for fall semester in order to maintain active student status for the entire academic year.

**ETD (Electronic Thesis and Defense) Submission**

Once the dissertation 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).

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<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21 Email dissertation to committee</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28 Meet with entire committee</td>
<td>March 1</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>7 Announce defense to department</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>14 Email dissertation document to all faculty</td>
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<td>18</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>21 Hold thesis defense</td>
<td>22</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>28 ETD submission deadline</td>
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**PART III. FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

i. Stipend and Tuition Scholarship Overview
Most students in the graduate program receive financial support on a 12-month basis in the form of a stipend and full tuition scholarship provided by the Department and University, although 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 four academic years for a Ph.D. student. The student may receive an additional semester or year of support if external funding, such as a grant, scholarship, or fellowship is obtained by the student or faculty advisor. Students who receive a stipend and tuition scholarship must be enrolled 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 from one academic year to the next 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. In order to be granted funding for the fifth semester, the student must complete the preliminary examination during the fourth semester in residence. In order to be granted a fourth year of funding, the student must submit a manuscript for publication by the end of the third year in residence. Details of regular progress and achievements are recorded in the Annual Report and discussed with the Graduate and Academic directors.

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 three years and a 9-month stipend of $15,000 for the fourth year in the program. Funding is for nine months in the final year because students are expected to complete and defend their dissertation by the end of the spring semester. 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 grants or fellowships (e.g., the University Research Council; which is outlined in more detail below).

There are three forms of Graduate Assistantships: Teaching Assistantships, Research Assistantships, and Departmental Fellowships.

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, 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 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 ($20,000 for first three years) may be higher depending on the stipulations of the grant. An RA should work no more than 20 hours per week.

**Departmental Fellowship (DF)** – Each Ph.D. student is put on fellowship during his or her fourth year in residence, unless otherwise notified by the Academic Director. This fellowship provides a $15,000 stipend for the nine-month academic year and full tuition remission. Because this award does not require teaching duties, recipients are expected to make substantial progress in research and dissertation writing leading to a timely completion of the degree.

**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 $600 to a Ph.D. 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 funded 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 departmental visitors.
- 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. Students 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.
The attached evaluation tool (rubric) is designed to assist program faculty in the evaluation of the graduate program’s ability to successfully prepare PhD students to propose graduate research. The rubric includes seven broad evaluation criteria. Evaluation of the qualifying exam can be an integral part of graduate student learning outcomes assessment conducted by graduate programs.

This evaluation tool is intended to:
- Provide students, prior to submitting their proposal, with a clear understanding of the aspects of their proposal deemed most important and relevant to their graduate program.
- Provide clear and concise feedback to students on how well their proposal does in meeting those program objectives, at a time when the feedback can be used to improve the final product.
- Encourage conversations among departmental colleagues about improving graduate student learning outcomes and assessment.
- Serve as a model for a “tool” that can be used by graduate programs both as they prepare their students to meet program learning objectives and as they report on their success in required assessment reports.

**Instructions:**
1. Faculty and students should review and become familiar with the criteria in this evaluation tool, as a guide, prior to the preparation of a thesis/dissertation proposal.

2. The rubric should be scored by each committee member when the proposal is submitted to the entire committee. The student should provide these forms to the committee members (and the advisor should please ensure this happens).

3. This coversheet should also be completed by all members of the committee. Please provide a summary of the scored rating for each of the criteria in the rubric.

4. The feedback provided by the scored rubric should be discussed directly with the student.

5. The student should keep this information as feedback for thesis/dissertation proposal development.

6. Electronic or scanned copies of the completed coversheets and rubrics should be delivered to the Graduate Director and Academic Director prior to the student’s qualifying exam. They will be retained in a secure file for use in future program assessments.

**Evaluator name:** _________________________

**Faculty role (e.g., primary advisor, internal committee member, external committee member):** _________________________

**Student name:** _________________________________

**Date of proposal review:** ______________________________________________________

**Proposal score summary by criterion assessment criteria:**


**Overall score:** ________
Completed by: __________________________   Date: __________________________   Student Name: __________________________

**Instructions:** Use the check boxes for detailed feedback, then make summary ratings for each criterion rating and overall assessment. Please use majority ratings to provide summary scores (e., if most check boxes are in the “Exceeds expectations” category, score should be 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Exceeds expectations = 3</th>
<th>Meets expectations = 2</th>
<th>Does not meet expectations = 1</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Mastery of theories and concepts in the field demonstrated in problem</td>
<td>✔ Arguments are superior</td>
<td>✔ Arguments are coherent</td>
<td>✔ Arguments are sometimes incorrect,</td>
<td>Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>statement and literature review</td>
<td>✔ Objectives are well defined</td>
<td>✔ Objectives are clear</td>
<td>incoherent, or flawed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✔ Exhibits mature, refined</td>
<td>✔ Acceptable critical thinking skills</td>
<td>✔ Objectives are poorly defined</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>critical thinking skills</td>
<td>✔ Reflects understanding of subject matter and literature</td>
<td>✔ Demonstrates limited critical thinking skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✔ Reflects mastery of subject matter and associated literature</td>
<td>✔ Demonstrates understanding of theoretical concepts</td>
<td>✔ Reflects limited understanding of subject matter and associated literature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✔ Demonstrates mastery of theoretical concepts</td>
<td>✔ Documentation is adequate</td>
<td>✔ Demonstrates limited understanding of theoretical concepts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✔ Documentation is excellent</td>
<td>✔ Generates adequate hypotheses</td>
<td>✔ Documentation is weak</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✔ Generates well-reasoned and well-supported hypotheses</td>
<td>✔ Adequate hypotheses</td>
<td>✔ Inadequate statement of hypotheses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Mastery of proposed methods</td>
<td>✔ Design is excellent</td>
<td>✔ Design is reasonable for questions</td>
<td>✔ Design is inappropriate for questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✔ Plan for analysis is exceptional; acknowledges limitations &amp; critically considers alternatives</td>
<td>✔ Plan for analysis reasonable, acknowledges some limitations</td>
<td>✔ Confused or ineffective plan for analysis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Quality of writing</td>
<td>✔ Writing is publication quality</td>
<td>✔ Writing is adequate</td>
<td>✔ Writing is weak</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✔ No grammar or spelling errors</td>
<td>✔ Some grammar and spelling errors</td>
<td>✔ Numerous grammatical and spelling errors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✔ Organization is excellent</td>
<td>✔ Organization is logical</td>
<td>✔ Organization is poor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✔ Style is exemplary</td>
<td>✔ Style is appropriate to discipline</td>
<td>✔ Style is not appropriate to discipline</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Originality and potential for contribution to discipline</td>
<td>✔ Exceptional potential for discovery</td>
<td>✔ Some potential for discovery</td>
<td>✔ Limited potential for discovery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✔ Greatly extends previous work</td>
<td>✔ Builds upon previous work</td>
<td>✔ Limited extension of previous published work in the field</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✔ Exceptional theoretical or applied significance</td>
<td>✔ Reasonable theoretical or applied significance</td>
<td>✔ Limited theoretical or applied significance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✔ Excellent publication potential</td>
<td>✔ Reasonable publication potential</td>
<td>✔ Limited publication potential</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Proposed timeline</td>
<td>✔ Timeline is more than adequate for proposed research</td>
<td>✔ Timeline is adequate for completing proposed research</td>
<td>✔ Timeline is insufficient for completing proposed research</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Funding</td>
<td>✔ Funding needs have been comprehensively considered.</td>
<td>✔ Funding needs have been adequately considered.</td>
<td>✔ Funding needs have not been adequately considered.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✔ Student has demonstrated outstanding effort to obtain $.</td>
<td>✔ Student has demonstrated sufficient effort to obtain funds.</td>
<td>✔ Student has not demonstrated sufficient effort to obtain funds.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Safety</td>
<td>✔ Consideration of safety in the field or lab is exceptional.</td>
<td>✔ Necessary safety measures to ensure safety in the field or lab have been adequately considered.</td>
<td>✔ Necessary measures to ensure safety in the field or lab are absent.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✔ Student has already undertaken necessary training.</td>
<td>✔ Student is aware of necessary training.</td>
<td>✔ Student is not aware of necessary training.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>