University of Nevada Reno
Department of Mathematics and Statistics

Statistics and Data Science Ph.D. program

Handbook of Policies and Procedures
for Current Graduate Students
Revised May 2018

University of Nevada, Reno
The Ph.D. Program in *Statistics and Data Science* at the University of Nevada Reno is offered by the Department of Mathematics & Statistics (DMS). The Department is home of a dynamic group of over 20 graduate faculty with diverse interests and expertise in Probability and Statistics as well as Pure and Applied Mathematics.

Faculty of the DMS are engaged in cutting edge interdisciplinary research and collaborate with other researchers both locally and at multiple institutions throughout the US and internationally. Graduate students have the opportunity to be part of these exciting activities. UNR and the Reno business community provide ample opportunities for internships, research collaborations, and consulting.

Teaching and research assistantships — as well as department and university-wide scholarships — are often available for qualified students. A limited number of competitive stipends that include tuition waiver and a subsidized medical plan are available for students in good academic standing. Students will also have opportunities to apply for external funding, and to participate in grant writing workshops to improve the effectiveness of their application materials.

Located where the Sierra Nevada meets the Great Basin, the University is 45 minutes from Lake Tahoe and four hours from San Francisco and the Napa-Sonoma wine country. Reno offers an excellent living environment, short commutes, a growing arts community, and an increasingly cosmopolitan flavor. Join us!

[Apply Online](https://www.unr.edu/admissions/)

Department of Mathematics and Statistics  
University of Nevada Reno  
1664 N. Virginia St., Reno, NV 89557  
[Web](https://www.unr.edu/math)  
[E-mail](mailto:math@unr.edu)  
Phone: (775) 784-6773

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1. [https://www.unr.edu/admissions/](https://www.unr.edu/admissions/)  
2. [https://www.unr.edu/math](https://www.unr.edu/math)  
3. math@unr.edu
Program Description
The Ph.D. program in Statistics and Data Science is designed to provide training in fundamental methods and concepts of modern Statistics focused on extracting knowledge from data. The program emphasizes interdisciplinary collaborative research. The program builds research and computational skills that will position students to be competitive in pursuing careers in academic, government, and business environments.

Student learning outcomes (SLOs).
After completion of the program the students will:
  1) Develop the advanced theoretical and computational skills necessary to solve applied problems involving data.
  2) Attain a deep understanding of the theory of statistics and data science sufficient to critically evaluate research done by others.
  3) Demonstrate the ability to do independent research and to communicate the results of this research, both orally and in writing.
  4) Acquire breadth of knowledge and the skills necessary to successfully collaborate or consult in a professional setting.

With questions about the program, please contact
Dr. Ilya Zaliapin
Director, PhD program in Statistics and Data Science
Department of Mathematics and Statistics
University of Nevada Reno
Reno, NV 89557
Email: zal@unr.edu
Phone: 1-775-784-6077

Note: This handbook lists graduate program academic policies and procedures. It includes information on graduate school policies, degree requirements, timeline for degree completion, committee selection guidelines and comprehensive exam/thesis requirements. Every effort has been made to make this handbook accurate as of the date of publication; however, this handbook does not constitute a contractual commitment. Graduate programs may not offer all of the courses as described, and policies are subject to yearly review and changes with program director and Graduate Council approval.

Application Process
Completion of a Bachelor’s degree in statistical or mathematical sciences or a related area is required prior to enrollment in the doctoral program.

Required Materials:
  ● Undergraduate/Graduate Transcripts from Previous Institutions
  ● GRE – General Test

*zal@unr.edu
• TOEFL/IELTS (only required for International students)
• Three (3) letters of recommendation
• Statement of purpose
• Resume
• Do you request financial support? A graduate support in a form of TA-ship (20h/week) is offered on a competitive basis to graduate students in good academic standing.

**Recommended Materials:**
• GRE – Mathematics Test scores

**Application Target Dates:**
December 1st for Fall admission, September 1st for Spring admission. We accept applications throughout the year, however the admission and funding decisions for the main cohorts of students are made after the given target dates.

You should [apply](http://www.unr.edu/grad/admissions/apply) at UNR Graduate School web site.
All applicants must meet the University [requirements](https://www.unr.edu/grad/admissions).

**Course Requirements**

**Course Work:**

Candidates for the Doctor of Philosophy degree must satisfy all general requirements of the Graduate School. The following requirements must be met prior to the granting of the degree:

• Minimum of 72 graduate credits
• Minimum of 48 graduate credits of course work
• Minimum of 30 credits of 700-level graduate credits (not counting dissertation)
• Minimum of 24 dissertation credits
• Maximum of 24 graduate credits (including maximum of 18 700-level graduate credits) from a completed master’s degree program or previous post-baccalaureate work may be applied to the program, per Graduate Director approval

All requirements, excluding prerequisite graduate courses, must be completed within 8 years immediately preceding the granting of the degree

**Required Courses:**

The following courses or their equivalents must be satisfactorily completed for the doctoral degree in Statistics and Data Science:

• MATH 713 – Abstract and Real Analysis (3 units)
• STAT 705 – Probability Theory (3 units)
• STAT 706 – Probability and Measure (3 units)

5 [http://www.unr.edu/grad/admissions/apply](http://www.unr.edu/grad/admissions/apply)
6 [https://www.unr.edu/grad/admissions](https://www.unr.edu/grad/admissions)
• STAT 725 – Mathematical Statistics I (3 units)
• STAT 726 – Mathematical Statistics II (3 units)
• STAT 735 – Linear Models I (3 units)
• STAT 736 – Linear Models II (3 units) (pending)
• STAT 753 – Stochastic Models and Simulations (3 units)
• STAT 755 – Multivariate Data Analysis (3 units)
• STAT 756 – Survival Analysis (3 units)
• STAT 758 – Time Series Analysis (3 units)
• STAT 745 – Statistical Computing (3 units)
• STAT 760 – Statistical Learning (3 units)
• STAT 799 – Dissertation (minimum of 24 units)
• Approved 700-level electives, based on research interests (9 units)

Electives:
Electives will be approved by the student’s Graduate Advisory Committee. Appropriate courses outside the Department of Mathematics and Statistics may be approved, depending on the student’s research interests.

Example electives in Mathematics and Statistics Department:

• STAT 653 Categorical Data Analysis
• STAT 775 Advanced Topics in Statistics
• MATH 630 Linear Algebra II
• MATH 640 Topology
• MATH 659 Topics in Probability
• MATH 666 Numerical Methods I
• MATH 667 Numerical Methods II
• MATH 714 Real Analysis II
• MATH 794 Research in Mathematical Sciences

Example electives in other programs:

• ATMS 745 Atmospheric Turbulence
• ATMS 746 Atmospheric modeling
• BCH 706 Functional Genomics
• BCH 707 Protein Structure and Function
• BCH 709 Bioinformatics
• BIOL 604 Population Genetics
• CS 615 Parallel Computing
• CS 657 Database Management Systems
• CS 677 Analysis of Algorithms
• EE 782 Random Signal Analysis and Estimation Theory
• PHY 732 Statistical Mechanics

The department is in the process of developing other classes in Mathematics and Statistics that can be used as electives.
**Qualifying Exams:**
After the first year, and by the end of the third year, every student must pass one written qualifying exam in the theory of Mathematical Statistics (STAT 725 and STAT 726), and a written qualifying exam in one of the following areas: Qualifying Exam in Probability (STAT 705 and STAT 706) or Qualifying Exam in Applied Statistics (STAT 735 and STAT 736). The students will be allowed a maximum of two attempts at each of the exams in the first three years of the Ph.D. program. Each exam can be passed at M.S. level (low pass) or Ph.D. level (high pass). To proceed with the Ph.D. program both exams must be passed at the Ph.D. level. If at least one exam is passed at the M.S. level, the student, if the academic record warrants it and the Graduate Advisory Committee approves of it, will end her/his program with an M.S. degree in Mathematics with Statistics emphasis.

**M.S. degree along the way to Ph.D:**
Students in the Ph.D. program in Statistics and Data Science may earn an M.S. degree in Mathematics with an emphasis in Statistics along the way to Ph.D., by satisfying the current M.S. degree requirements. Students qualify in the semester in which all degree requirements for the master's have been met. Students should apply to graduation using the paperwork required for an M.S. degree and a memo from the Ph.D. Program Director. A maximum of 24 credits (including maximum of 18 700-level courses) used for the master’s degree can be applied to a Ph.D. degree, upon approval of the Program Director. The M.S. thesis credits used for an M.S. degree cannot be applied toward a Ph.D. degree. At the same time, the M.S. thesis credits can be counted as Ph.D. dissertation credits (upon Graduate Advisory Committee approval) if they have not been used for an M.S. degree. A maximum of 9 graduate credits earned outside of the program can be applied towards a M.S. Mathematics degree; these credits can be further applied to a Ph.D. degree as part of 24 credits transferred from M.S. to Ph.D. degree (in other words, up to 24 credits can be double-counted, and up to 9 credits can be triple-counted).

**Admittance to Candidacy:**
To be admitted into Ph.D. candidacy, after successfully completing the first 2-3 years of coursework and passing written qualifying exams, a student must pass an oral exam in the area of specialty. Students will be expected to complete their oral exam by the end of their third year. The exam is directed by the student's Graduate Advisory Committee. A student is expected to submit a written dissertation proposal to the Graduate Advisory Committee prior to exam. The purpose of the exam is two-fold, serving both as a subject-specific oral exam and defense of a dissertation proposal. It provides students an opportunity to formulate a clear plan for their dissertation research, and to strengthen their background following their written exams and in preparation for conducting their own dissertation research.

**Ph.D. Dissertation:**
A student will prepare a Ph.D. dissertation supervised by a graduate faculty member in the Mathematics and Statistics department and approved by the student's Graduate Advisory Committee, followed by a public oral presentation. The dissertation is then submitted for the Graduate School and institutional approval.
**Graduate School Academic Requirements:**
All graduate students must maintain a cumulative graduate GPA of 3.0. If their GPA drops below 3.0 they are either placed on probation or dismissed. Undergraduate courses will not count towards graduate GPA.

**Probation:** students whose cumulative graduate GPA is 0.1 to 0.6 points below that needed for a 3.0 GPA are put on probation. Students are placed on academic probation for one semester. If they fail to raise their cumulative GPA to 3.0 by the end of one semester, they are dismissed from their graduate program. Thesis, dissertation, S/U graded credits, and transfer credits have no impact on a student’s GPA.

**Dismissal:** students whose cumulative graduate GPA is 0.7 or more grade points below that needed for a 3.0 GPA are dismissed. Dismissed students are no longer in a graduate program but may take graduate-level courses as a Grad Special. Students wishing to complete their degree must obtain approval to take graduate-level courses, raise their graduate GPA to at least 3.0 and then re-apply to a graduate program. Any courses taken to raise their GPA will be included in the graduate special/transfer credit limitation (9 credits for master’s degrees).

**Timeline for Degree Completion**

**Fall 1 (9 units)**
- MATH 713 – Abstract and Real Analysis (3 units)
- STAT 661 – A First Course in Probability (3 units)
- STAT 667 – Statistical Theory (3 units)

**Spring 1 (9 units)**
- STAT 6XX – Statistical Computing (3 units) (pending)
- STAT 7XX – Probability Theory (3 units) (pending)
- STAT 754 – Mathematical Statistics

**Fall 2 (9 units)**
- STAT 652 – Introduction to Regression and Linear Models (3 units)
- STAT 662 – Introduction to Stochastic Processes (3 units)
- STAT 755 – Multivariate Data Analysis (3 units)

**Spring 2 (9 units)**
- STAT 756 – Survival Analysis (3 units)
- STAT 760 – Multivariate Data Analysis (3 units) (pending)

**Fall 3 (9 units)**
- STAT 758 – Time Series Analysis (3 units)
- STAT 799 – Dissertation (3 units)
- Approved 700-level elective
**Recommended timeline:**
- Take 9 graduate credits per semester

**Between second and sixth semesters:**
- Complete written qualifying exams in the theory of Mathematical Statistics and one of the following: Probability or Applied Statistics.

**Second year (third and fourth semesters):**
- Meet with faculty to select potential adviser and make a preliminary selection of the dissertation topic.
- Beginning of the fourth semester: Secure Graduate Advisory Committee.

**Fifth semester:**
- Complete Ph.D. Program of Study form, confirm with adviser, and secure committee signatures

**Fifth semester:**
- Start working on the dissertation with adviser.
- By the end of sixth semester: Complete oral exam in the area of specialty.
- Seventh semester: Have dissertation draft (first chapter is ready, there is a clear plan for the other chapters).

**Eighth semester:**
- Complete dissertation draft, discuss with committee, finalize dissertation according to committee recommendations, present the dissertation.

**Forms:**
Are required to be submitted to the graduate school, along with deadlines for submission:
Declaration of Advisor/MajorAdvisor/Committee Chair
For doctoral students, completed form must be submitted to Graduate School by the end of the student’s third semester

Program of Study
For doctoral students, completed form must be submitted to Graduate School by the end of the student’s fourth semester

(Doctoral Programs only) Doctoral degree admission to candidacy
For doctoral students who completed all requirements except for the dissertation

Graduation Application
Must be submitted to the graduate school several weeks in advance. Check website for exact dates

Doctoral Notice of Completion
completed form should be submitted after all requirements have been met.

Exit Survey
You can find an updated list of forms and requirements online.

Committee Selection Guideline
Each student must secure a Ph.D. dissertation committee. The role of the committee is to advise the student during his/her Ph.D. program career on matters including class selection and sequencing, research work, specialty exam, dissertation preparation and defense. The students are encouraged to form their committee as early as possible, but not later than the end of their fourth semester. The Graduate School requires each student to form the committee by the end of their fourth semester.

The committee must consist of a minimum of five graduate faculty members; the advisor (who will chair the committee), at least two faculty members from the student’s major department/program, at least one faculty member from another department in a field related to the student’s major, and at least one Graduate School representative. Formal approval of committee is made by the Graduate Dean.

Comprehensive Exams
(See Sect. above)
Dissertation Requirements

Each student must prepare a Ph.D. Dissertation guided by his/her advisor. The advisor must be selected from the graduate faculty members of the Department of Mathematics and Statistics. The details of dissertation preparation and presentation should be discussed with adviser.

Graduate School forms and resources related to and dissertations:

- [Doctoral Dissertation Filing Guidelines](http://www.unr.edu/grad/forms/dissertation-filing-guidelines)
- [Dissertation Title Form](https://www.unr.edu/grad/forms-and-deadlines/dissertation-title-form)

Once all requirements have been met, students need to submit a Final Review Approval and Notice of Completion form in order to graduate.

- [Doctoral Final Review Approval](https://www.unr.edu/Documents/graduate-school/dissertation-final-review-approval-form.pdf)
- Obtain sign-off from advisory committee chair

- [Doctoral Notice of Completion](http://www.unr.edu/Documents/graduate-school/notice-of-completion-doctoral-degree.pdf)
- Completed form should be submitted after all requirements have been met.

Graduate Assistantships

Teaching Assistantships award a competitive stipend for the academic year plus a tuition and fee waiver and a subsidized medical plan. Teaching assistants will be expected to perform specific teaching and grading duties. Normally this will not exceed teaching 6 credit hours per semester or the academic equivalent. Awards are based on academic credentials submitted with the graduate school application. Research Assistantships are sometimes available as well.

**Teaching Assistantships are also subject to the following guidelines:**

TA support is normally approved for 8 semesters for students entering with a bachelor degree and 4 semesters for students with a master’s degree, subject to good academic standing and normal degree progress. To get TA support beyond this period requires special semester-by-semester approval of the Graduate Committee.

Students being supported by a TA are expected to enroll in at least 6 credits of approved graduate coursework. The courses Grad 701 and Math 899 do not count toward this 6-credit requirement. All graduate students holding an assistantship (teaching GTA or GRA) are considered Nevada residents for tuition purposes. Non-resident tuition is only waived for the duration of the assistantship.

To be eligible for an assistantship, students must be admitted to a degree-granting program and be in good academic standing. The student must have an overall GPA of at least 3.0 and must be continuously enrolled in at least 6 graduate level credits (600-700) throughout the duration of the assistantship.

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16 [https://www.unr.edu/Documents/graduate-school/dissertation-final-review-approval-form.pdf](https://www.unr.edu/Documents/graduate-school/dissertation-final-review-approval-form.pdf)
State-funded assistantships (GTA/GRA) may be held for a maximum of: three (3) years for master’s degree students and five (5) years for doctoral degree students.

Information on graduate assistantship in the graduate school website:
General Information\(^1\)\(^8\)
Graduate Assistantship Handbook\(^1\)\(^9\)

Health Insurance

All domestic degree seeking graduate students, who are enrolled in six or more credits (regardless of the course level) in a semester, will be automatically enrolled and billed for the University sponsored health insurance\(^2\)\(^0\) for each term they are eligible (fall & spring/summer). If a student has other comparable coverage and would like to waive out of the student health insurance, it is the student’s responsibility to complete the University online waiver form\(^2\)\(^1\) prior to the deadline. If approved, a health insurance waiver is good for the current academic year only. A new waiver must be submitted each academic year. All international graduate students are required to carry student health insurance, and the cost will be automatically added to your student account. Any international graduate students with insurance questions must contact the Office of International Students and Scholars (OISS)\(^2\)\(^2\) directly.

Transfer Credits

These are credits transferred from another institution. Credits completed at UNR in another program or as a graduate special do not need to be transferred. Transfer credit is requested on the Graduate Credit Transfer Evaluation Request\(^2\)\(^3\) form available on Graduate School website.

The form must be signed by the student, major advisor, and graduate director. Transfer credits applied to a master’s program must comply with the time limitation on master’s work (6 years). Thus, if a student took a course five years prior to admission, they would have to complete the degree within one year for the course to apply to the degree. Credits from a completed master’s degree will be exempt from the 8-year time limitation for those students earning a doctoral degree.

Leave of Absence

Continuous Enrollment: To maintain “good standing” all graduate students are required to enroll in a minimum of three (3) graduate credits each fall and spring semester until they graduate. International students may be required to enroll in nine graduate credits each fall and spring semester depending on the requirements of their visa. All students holding assistantships (whether teaching or

\(^1\)\(^8\) https://www.unr.edu/grad/funding/graduate-assistantships
\(^1\)\(^9\) https://www.unr.edu/Documents/administration-finance/hr/hr-graduate/GA_handbook.pdf
\(^2\)\(^0\) http://www.unr.edu/grad/health-insurance
\(^2\)\(^1\) https://studentinsurance.usi.com/UNR/unn-grad
\(^2\)\(^2\) https://www.unr.edu/oiss
\(^2\)\(^3\) http://www.unr.edu/Documents/graduateschool/GraduateCreditTransferEvaluationRequest.pdf
research assistantships) are required to enroll in a minimum of six (6) graduate credits each semester they hold the assistantship.

**Leave of Absence:** Students in good standing may request a leave of absence by completing a leave of absence form available on the Graduate School website during which time they are not required to maintain continuous registration. Usually, a leave of absence is approved for one or two semesters. The leave of absence request may be extended by the student filing an additional leave of absence form. Students applying for a leave of absence should not have any “incomplete” grades which could be changed to “F” and have a detrimental impact on their cumulative GPA. Requests for leave of absences must be received by the Graduate School no later than the last day of enrollment for the semester the leave is to begin.

**Reinstatement:** When a student has been absent for one semester or more without an approved leave of absence, he or she may request reinstatement via the Reinstatement form, available on the Graduate School website.

This form allows the program the option to recommend the student be re-admitted to their graduate program based on their previous admission OR require the student to re-apply for admission which would require students to submit a new application for admission and pay the application fee. The Notice of Reinstatement to Graduate Standing must be received by the Graduate School no later than the last day of enrollment for the semester the reinstatement is to begin.

**Graduate Student Association**

The Graduate Student Association (GSA) represents all graduate students and promotes the welfare and interests of the graduate students at the University of Nevada, Reno. The GSA works closely with appropriate university administrative offices, including the Graduate School and Student Services and reports to the President of the University. The GSA government functions through the Council of Representatives, Executive Council and established committees.

All forms are available at The Graduate School website.

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26 [www.unr.edu/grad/forms](http://www.unr.edu/grad/forms)