

UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA RENO

BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING PROGRAM

GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK

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1. Program Description

The Biomedical Engineering Program offers graduate degrees that provide a balanced education in bioengineering. Our students gain experience at the intersection of engineering and biological systems and learn how to couple engineering and computational skills with biological processes/functions at multiple scales. The goal of the program is to cover Engineering methods for (i) bioinstrumentation, (ii) cell and molecular imaging, and (iii) modeling at multiple scales. Each of these focus areas intends to improve (a) instrumentation and readouts for health and safety, (b) understanding of the biological processes, and (c) modeling of biological processes through bioinformatics, big data analysis, or computational biology.

1.1. Program/Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

1. An ability to apply engineering research and theory to advance the art, science and practice of the discipline.
2. An ability to design and conduct experiments as well as to analyze, interpret, apply and disseminate the data.
3. An understanding of research methodology.

1.2. Graduate Degrees Offered

Graduate programs offered lead to the degrees of:

- MS in Biomedical Engineering
 - Thesis option (Plan A)
 - Non- thesis option (Plan B)
- PhD in Biomedical Engineering
- Accelerated BS/MS program

Master of Science in Biomedical Engineering (MS in BME): An advanced degree with a focus on either bioinstrumentation, cell and molecular imaging, or modeling that can be applied at multiple scales. The master's degree program offers courses of study that cover the theory and design fundamentals at multiple scales of biological processes, function, and instrumentation.

Doctor of Philosophy in Biomedical Engineering (PhD in BME): An advanced degree that emphasizes a synthesis of biological processes, developing novel instrumentation, or modeling at different scales of biological or ecological systems. The emphasis may include advanced nano-sensors and “Lab on a Chip”, bioinformatics, and integrated techniques in cancer biology. Students are involved in many aspects of original research, advancing scientific knowledge in specific areas.

Accelerated BS/MS program: An accelerated BS-MS program enables our outstanding students to obtain a master's degree in Biomedical engineering in 5 years.

1.3. Graduate Director and Contact Information

The BME Graduate Director oversees all aspects of graduate education within the department. Some of the Graduate Director's activities include:

- Overseeing the admissions process; ensuring admission of highly qualified applicants; requesting and justifying admission of applicants not meeting minimum university requirements;
- Reviewing and approving programs of study and the composition of advisory/examining

- committees;
- Reviewing and approving acceptance of transfer credits;
- Graduate student recruitment and promotion of the graduate program;
- Mediating in conflicts between graduate students and their advisor.

Contact Information of the BME Graduate Director

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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.

2. MS in Biomedical Engineering

The Department offers an advanced degree with a focus on either bioinstrumentation, bioelectromagnetics, or prosthetic devices that can be applied at multiple scales. The master's degree program offers courses of study that cover the theory and design principles at multiple scales of biological processes, function, and instrumentation.

2.1. Total number of credits needed

Graduate students seeking the degree of Master of Science are given the opportunity to focus on a specific area in Biomedical engineering and perform preliminary research through the “thesis” option (Plan A) or to study several different subjects in Electrical and Biomedical engineering without necessarily specializing on any of them through the “courses-only” option (Plan B). The credit requirements in each case are the following:

2.1.1. Plan A: Thesis Option

- This option requires a total of 30 credits and includes:
 - 24 course credits
 - 6.0 thesis credits (BME 797)
- To comply with the Graduate School's requirements, students must take:
 - **four** 700-level courses
 - **four** courses at either the 600 or 700 level.
- Additionally students take the following:
 - BME 601: Introduction to Biomedical Engineering
 - BME 626 Biomedical Instrumentation
 - Specialization area requirement: one course from two of the three research areas.
 - 18 credits must be in Biomedical Engineering. Non-BME credits must be relevant to the BME discipline (EBME, Math, IS).
- Course Electives
 - One independent study is allowed.
 - One internship study is allowed.
- Plan A students must assemble an advisory committee for their thesis.

2.1.2. Plan B: Courses-only Option

- This option requires a total of 33 course credits:
- To comply with the Graduate School's requirements, students must take:
 - **five** 700-level courses and
 - **six** courses at the 600 or 700 level.
- Additionally students must meet the following:
 - Theory core course requirement
 - Specialization area requirement: one course from each of the three research areas.
 - Capstone requirement: One of the 700-level courses must include a graduate-level capstone project that integrates knowledge from your previous courses and demonstrates general mastery in the field.
- Course Electives
 - One independent study is allowed.
 - One internship study is allowed.
 - 24 credits must be in Biomedical engineering. Non-BME credits must be relevant to the BME disciplines.
- Plan B students do not have to assemble an advisory committee.
- Plan B students are not eligible for teaching or research assistantships.

While it is not necessary for students to immediately decide which path to take, it is important that they meet frequently with their graduate advisor to focus their endeavors. Courses only students are typically advised by the graduate director.

2.2. Course Work

All course work must be completed within six years preceding the awarding of the degree.

2.2.1. Bioinstrumentation core classes

In terms of specific coursework, students from both degree options must complete one of the following theory courses, if they have not already done so as undergraduates:

- BME 601

2.2.2. Specialization Areas Requirement

Graduate students pursuing the “thesis” option must take one course from at least two of the three specialization areas listed below. Graduate students pursuing the “courses-only” option must complete one course

1. BME 626
2. BME 631
3. BME 681

A list of courses for each research area can be found on the [Biomedical Engineering MS General Catalog Website](#)¹.

2.2.3. Independent study

One independent study is allowed for both MS options and two for the PhD degree. Independent studies provide a way for students to learn specialized material or gain research experience. Typically a student and faculty member agree upon a topic for the student to research with guidance from the instructor for an agreed upon amount of credits.

¹https://catalog.unr.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=24&poid=17633#_ga=2.169298850.222468687.1516830021-759821366.1508959810

2.2.4. Suggested course schedule

This schedule is merely a suggestion and can vary depending on your advisor (Plan A) and course availability etc.

Plan A (30 credits)

1st semester: 6-9 credits of 600/700 level courses

2nd semester: 6-9 credits of 600/700 level courses

3rd semester: 6-9 credits of 600/700 level courses

4th semester: 6-9 credits BME 797 (thesis) + 3-6 credits of 600/700 level courses

Plan B (30 credits)

1st semester: 6-9 credits of 600/700 level courses

2nd semester: 6-9 credits of 600/700 level courses

3rd semester: 6-9 credits of 600/700 level courses

4th semester: 6-9 credits of 600/700 level courses

2.3. Comprehensive exam.

There is no comprehensive exam for the MS degree.

2.4. Thesis

For the thesis option, a thesis involving original research in Biomedical engineering completes the M.S. program. Students must register for six credits of BME 797 (thesis) either in the last semester or 3 credits in the semester that the student defends their thesis and 3 credits in the preceding semester. A defense must be held as a public oral examination, which is announced via posting and electronic mail at least one week in advance. The announcement must include the title and abstract of the work, the date, time and place of the exam, and the names of the student and of the committee chair. See [Section 11](#) for thesis guidelines and formatting requirements.

3. Ph.D. Biomedical Engineering

The Department of Biomedical Engineering at the University of Nevada, Reno offers an in-depth, cutting-edge curriculum for those graduate students seeking the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Doctoral students are given the opportunity to focus on a specific area in Biomedical engineering by taking advanced courses and becoming significantly involved in many aspects of original research, advancing scientific knowledge in their field of specialization.

3.1. Total number of credits needed.

The credit requirements for the doctoral program in Biomedical Engineering are the following:

- A PhD requires a total of 72 credits beyond a BS degree and includes:
 - 30 credits of 700-level courses.
 - If you already have an MS degree 24 units can be transferred (grades B or better) with a maximum of 18 credits from 700 level courses).
 - 12 credits of 600/700 level courses.
 - 24 credits dissertation work (BME 799)
- Students must take the following:
 - Meet the breadth course requirement
 - 3.0 credits of Comprehensive Exam (BME 795)
- Course Electives:
 - Two independent studies
 - 36 out of the 48 non dissertation credits (75%) must be in Electrical or Biomedical Engineering, i.e., must be credits with EE or BME code. Non-BME credits must be relevant to the BME discipline.

3.2. Course work

All course work must be completed within eight years preceding the awarding of the degree. Credits transferred into doctoral degree from a completed master's degree are exempt from this eight-year limit.

3.2.1. Breadth requirement

All students must show that they have taken at least one course, at the 400- level or above, in **four** of the **six** areas listed below, earning at least a "B". Students lacking sufficient background in these areas must complete prescribed prerequisite courses within the first year.

- BME 601
- BME 626
- BME 631
- BME 681

3.2.3. Comprehensive exam

The student's dissertation committee must be formed within a year of admission to the Ph.D. program. The committee will be responsible for:

- Program of study.
- Directing the student towards the written and oral requirement of their comprehensive exam and advancement to candidacy.
- Direction of student's research.

Doctoral Programs: Consist of a minimum of five graduate faculty members; the chair, at least two faculty members from the student's major department/program, at least one faculty member

from a department in a field related to the student's major, and at least one Graduate School representative.

In case of interdisciplinary graduate programs, the Graduate School Representative cannot have a primary appointment in the same department (or other appropriate major unit) as the student's committee chair.

Formal approval of all student advisory committees is made by the Graduate Dean.

Before candidates can receive their Ph.D. in Biomedical engineering, they must pass the comprehensive exam by enrolling in BME 795. The exam must be taken as soon as the student has completed 24 graduate units of coursework in order to be admitted into candidacy. The comprehensive exam must be taken at least one semester before the dissertation defense. A student can take the exam up to two times. If he/she cannot pass the exam the second time, then the student will be dismissed from graduate studies. The exam has two requirements: written and oral.

Written Requirement:

- Thorough review of the literature for the student's research area
- Research proposal (goals, methodology, research plan)
- Work in progress

Oral Requirement:

- Public colloquium covering the written exam
- Q&A by the student's dissertation committee, covering the written exam

The student's dissertation committee will decide whether the student passes/fails the written and oral portions of the comprehensive exam.

According to UNR regulations, admission to candidacy confirms that a student has successfully completed the departmental course requirements and university residency requirements. In order to gain admission to candidacy, a student must meet all the following requirements:

1. Hold at least a "B" average in all graduate work;
2. Pass the comprehensive exam
3. Gain the advisory/examining committee's formal approval for the program of study, including dissertation development.

[Doctoral degree admission to candidacy form](#)² needs to be submitted to the grad school and the student's advisory committee, graduate director of the program and the Graduate Dean must approve the form.

3.3. Suggested Course Schedule

This schedule is merely a suggestion and can vary depending on your advisor and course availability etc.

1st semester: 6-9 credits of 600/700 level courses

2nd semester: 6-9 credits of 600/700 level courses

3rd semester: 6-9 credits of 600/700 + 3 credits CPE 795 (comprehensive exam)

4th semester: 6-9 credits of 600/700 level courses

² <https://www.unr.edu/Documents/graduate-school/17doctoral-degree-admission-to-candidacy-updated.pdf>

5th semester: 6-9 credits of 600/700 level courses
6th semester: 6-9 credits of BME 799 (dissertation)

7th semester: 6-9 credits of BME 799 (dissertation)
8th semester: 8-9 credits of BME 799 (dissertation)

3.4. Publication requirement

PhD students are expected that by the time of their dissertation defense they have published in high quality venues and have at least 2 conference papers and 1 journal article. Further, it is recommended that all Ph.D. students are involved in writing grant applications under supervision by their faculty advisors.

3.5. Dissertation Defense

A Dissertation involving original research in Biomedical engineering completes the Ph.D. program. A Dissertation defense must be held as a public oral examination, which is announced via posting and electronic mail at least one week in advance. The announcement must include the title and abstract of the work, the date, time and place of the exam, and the names of the student and of the committee chair. A successful dissertation defense is reflected by no more than one negative vote from a member of the advisory/examining. If two negative votes are cast – regardless of the total number of committee members – the defense is unsuccessful. At the discretion of the committee, the candidate may be permitted one additional attempt to conduct a successful defense.

4. 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 form](#)³ available on Graduate School website and must be signed by the student, major advisor, and graduate director. Only courses with a grade of "C" or better may be transferred to a master's program; only courses with a grade of "B" or better may be transferred to a doctoral program. 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. No more than nine (9) credits completed either prior to admission to a graduate program or transferred from another institution may be applied to a master's degree. For doctoral programs a maximum of twenty-four (24) credits from a previously completed master's program or other post BS degree program may be applied. Doctoral students who have completed a master's degree in an appropriate discipline from an accredited institution may, with the approval of their graduate director, receive up to twenty-four (24) credits toward a Ph.D. degree. Students must list each course for which they wish to receive transfer credit on the *Credit Transfer Evaluation Request Form*. All credits used to satisfy degree requirements for the master's degree, except thesis credits, may be acceptable for transfer.

5. Timeline for degree completion

- [Declaration of Advisor/Major Advisor/Committee Chair form](#)⁴

³<http://www.unr.edu/Documents/graduateschool/GraduateCreditTransferEvaluationRequest.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.unr.edu/Documents/graduate-school/Declaration-of-Advisor.pdf>

- For MS students, completed form must be submitted to Graduate School by the end of the student's second semester
- For PhD students completed form must be submitted to Graduate School by the end of the student's third semester
- [Program of Study form](#)⁵
 - For master's students, completed form must be submitted to Graduate School by the end of the student's third semester
 - For PhD students, completed form must be submitted to Graduate School by the end of the student's fourth semester
- [Doctoral degree admission to candidacy form](#)⁶
 - For PhD students who completed all requirements except for the dissertation
- [Graduation Application deadlines](#)⁷ Must be submitted to the graduate school several weeks in advance (see 5.2)
 - May Graduation Deadline: March 1
 - August Graduation Deadline: June 1
 - December Graduation Deadline: October 1
- Notice of completion – completed form should be submitted after all requirements have been met. See [graduation website](#)⁸ for exact dates
 - [Master's Notice of completion](#)⁹
 - [Doctoral Notice of completion](#)¹⁰
- [Exit Survey form](#)¹¹

5.1. Program of study

A program of study describes the student's specific plan of courses, research, and related activities. The graduate student's Advisor, the Graduate Director of the program, and the Advisory/Examining Committee determine the program of study for each degree candidate. This includes the thesis/professional paper option and the acceptable courses for completion of the degree. The Graduate Dean has final approval of the program of study. Only graduate courses are applicable toward the graduate degree (graduate courses are those with numbers in the 600 and 700 ranges). The approved Program of Study Requirements Form, indicating the members of the Advisory/Examining Committee and the courses used to fulfill the degree requirements, must be filed with the Graduate School. The program of study must be approved by the Graduate Dean prior to the student applying for graduation. MS students that do a courses only option only have to list the graduate director as their advisor on their program of study (no advising committee is required). Changes to the program of study can be made using the change in program of study [[Program of Study form](#)¹²] or change of advisory [[change of advisory form](#)¹³] with approval from the graduate director. It is the responsibility of the student and the Advisory/Examining Committee to ensure that the graduate courses in the proposed program of study are consistent with the requirements of the Graduate School and the department.

⁵ <http://www.unr.edu/Documents/graduate-school/program-of-study.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.unr.edu/Documents/graduate-school/17doctoral-degree-admission-to-candidacy-updated.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.unr.edu/grad/graduation-and-deadlines>

⁸ <https://www.unr.edu/grad/graduation-and-deadlines>

⁹ <https://www.unr.edu/Documents/graduate-school/notice-of-completion-master->

¹⁰ <https://www.unr.edu/Documents/graduate-school/notice-of-completion-doctoral-degree.pdf>

¹¹ <https://www.unr.edu/grad/forms-and-deadlines/exit-survey>

¹² <http://www.unr.edu/Documents/graduate-school/program-of-study.pdf>

¹³ <https://www.unr.edu/Documents/graduate-school/3change-of-advisory-committee.pdf>

5.2. Applying for graduation

Completing all the requirements for your degree may then involve:

- Completing all course work and having final grades filed
- Successfully completing your comprehensive examination
- Defending your thesis or dissertation, making all necessary modifications and submitted the final work to the Graduate School
- Filing all outstanding paperwork (notice of completion, etc.)

After you've completed all requirements and submitted all necessary documents, you should check your transcript after the semester ends to ensure that grades have been received for all course work. If, for example, you take a course in your final semester that does not apply to your degree requirements and receive an "I – Incomplete" grade in that course, you will NOT be able to graduate: grades must be received for all course work regardless of whether or not the course applies to fulfilling degree requirements. If you've finished work for a previously received "I" grade, you should check your transcript to ensure that the instructor has actually filed a final grade for that course. There are cases where courses exceed the time limit for the degree or that grades received for particular courses do not meet minimum university standards (i.e. receiving a "C-" in a course). In these instances, the student must meet with their graduate director to explore corrective measures such as petitioning for an extension of the time limit or substituting an appropriate graduate course for another.

5.3. Commencement

Graduating doctoral students are accorded special recognition during commencement exercises by participating in a Hooding Ceremony. They receive their doctoral hoods from their faculty mentor and the Dean of the Graduating School. To participate in this ceremony, students must have:

1. Filed an application for graduation for the appropriate semester (fall or spring); and
2. Successfully defended their dissertation and filed the Notice of Completion with the Graduate School at least one week prior to the commencement exercises. Students who complete their degree during the summer session are eligible to attend either the fall or spring commencement exercises.

Commencement exercises are held each December and May. There is a separate commencement ceremony held for advanced degrees conferred in May of each year. The December exercises are combined graduate/undergraduate ceremonies. Doctoral students are "hooded" by their academic advisors. Students and advisors process in and are seated together.

6. Committee selection guideline

6.1. MS thesis advisory committee

Courses only MS student do not need to assemble an advisory committee. For the thesis option, the committee should consist of at least 3 members, all who must be members of the Graduate Faculty. The committee must be formed no later than at the end of 3rd semester. One of the members must be the graduate student's advisor, serving as Committee Chair, and one must be from outside the Department of Electrical and Biomedical Engineering, serving as the Graduate School Representative. The Graduate School Representative member's role on the committee is not necessarily to provide subject-matter expertise but rather to ensure compliance with university policy and regulations; to serve as a representative of the Graduate Dean, "outside" the department granting the degree; and to provide an objective, non-partisan, independent

perspective. Students may request the appointment of a committee member from the faculty of another university or from a relevant discipline or profession, provided the prospective member has achieved a record of distinction. Formal approval of the student's Advisory/Examining Committee is made by the Graduate Dean.

The Advisory/Examining Committee approves the student's program of study and guides the students through his or her graduate program. The student should maintain close contact with his or her committee, keeping them informed of his or her progress and allowing them ample time to review drafts of the student's thesis or dissertation. The students should be aware of their schedules when trying to arrange committee meetings and thesis defense. Note that it is the student's responsibility to make these arrangements.

6.2. PhD Advisory/Examining Committee

The committee must be formed no later than end of 4th semester. The Advisory/Examining Committee of a doctoral student should consist of at least 5 members, who must all be members of the Graduate Faculty. One of the members must be the student's advisor, serving as Committee Chair, two or more members must be from the Electrical and Biomedical Engineering Department, one or more from departments in related fields, and one from outside the Department of Electrical and Biomedical Engineering, serving as the Graduate School Representative. The Graduate School Representative member's role on the committee is not necessarily to provide subject-matter expertise but rather to ensure compliance with university policy and regulations; to serve as a representative of the Graduate Dean, "outside" the department granting the degree; and to provide an objective, non-partisan, independent perspective. Students may request the appointment of a committee member from the faculty of another university or from a relevant discipline or profession, provided the prospective member has achieved a record of distinction. Formal approval of the student's Advisory/Examining Committee is made by the Graduate Dean.

For students going directly from the Bachelor's degree to the Ph.D. degree, the Advisory/Examining Committee should be formed prior to the completion of 24 credits in graduate courses. Students entering the Ph.D. program with a Master's degree should form the Advisory/Examining Committee during their first semester of enrollment.

The Advisory/Examining Committee approves the student's program of study and guides the students through his or her graduate program. The student should maintain close contact with his or her committee, keeping them informed of his or her progress and allowing them ample time to review drafts of the student's thesis or dissertation. The students should be aware of their schedules when trying to arrange committee meetings and thesis defense. Note that it is the student's responsibility to make these arrangements.

7. Thesis/dissertation requirements

Graduate School forms and resources related to thesis and dissertations:

- [MS Thesis Filing Guidelines¹⁴](https://www.unr.edu/grad/forms-and-deadlines/thesis-filing-guidelines)
- [Doctoral Dissertation Filing Guidelines¹⁵](https://www.unr.edu/grad/forms-and-deadlines/dissertation-filing-guidelines)
- [Dissertation Title Form¹⁶](https://www.unr.edu/grad/forms-and-deadlines/dissertation-title-form)

Please also include that once all requirements have been met, students need to submit a Final Review Approval and Notice of Completion form in order to graduate.

- Final Review Approval – Obtain sign-off from advisory committee chair.

¹⁴ <https://www.unr.edu/grad/forms-and-deadlines/thesis-filing-guidelines>

¹⁵ <https://www.unr.edu/grad/forms-and-deadlines/dissertation-filing-guidelines>

¹⁶ <https://www.unr.edu/grad/forms-and-deadlines/dissertation-title-form>

- o [Master's form¹⁷](#)
 - o [Doctoral form¹⁸](#)
- Notice of completion – completed form should be submitted after all requirements have been met.
 - o [Master's form¹⁹](#)
 - o [Doctoral form²⁰](#)

8. Graduate Assistantships

Graduate assistantship positions are offered through various departments and are paid by grants or state funds. Students interested in these positions must contact the department for specific requirements. The Graduate School is responsible for approval of graduate assistantships after a department has requested the initiation of a contract. All positions are contingent upon available funding.

Graduate assistants perform a variety of duties from teaching undergraduate classes to grading papers, to conducting research in laboratories. Teaching assistants receive special teaching-skills training through the [Excellence in Teaching Program²¹](#).

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.

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.

Please also refer to the most updated information on graduate assistantship in the graduate school website:

- [General information²²](#)
- [Graduate Assistantship handbook²³](#)

8.1. Graduate Employment: Rights and Responsibilities

Graduate Assistants play an invaluable role in the university's instruction and research endeavors. In their roles as graduate assistants, graduate students should be treated with respect as junior colleagues, and receive guidance in the performance of their duties as necessary. Graduate Assistants are classified as professional employees, as such they do not work according to the clock, but rather, according to performance of a specified job. Graduate Assistants work on average 20 hours per week for a 0.5 FTE employee.

8.1.1. Rights

Graduate students have the right to fair and equitable treatment as employees (**UNR general**

¹⁷ <https://www.unr.edu/Documents/graduate-school/thesis-final-review-approval-form.pdf>

¹⁸ <https://www.unr.edu/Documents/graduate-school/dissertation-final-review-approval-form.pdf>

¹⁹ <https://www.unr.edu/Documents/graduate-school/notice-of-completion-master-degree-updated.pdf>

²⁰ <https://www.unr.edu/Documents/graduate-school/notice-of-completion-doctoral-degree.pdf>

²¹ <https://library.unr.edu/TLT>

²² <https://www.unr.edu/grad/funding/graduate-assistantships>

²³ https://www.unr.edu/Documents/administration-finance/hr/hr_graduate/GA_handbook.pdf

catalog -Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity statement). Graduate Assistants have the right to discuss and clarify the conditions of their employment and expected workload with their supervisor. Graduate Assistants have the right to expect the work requirements to be consistent with professional expectations. Consequently graduate assistants should not be assigned, as part of their employment, inappropriate work tasks as house-sitting, babysitting, etc. for their supervisor.

8.1.2. Responsibilities

As professional employees, graduate assistants should conduct themselves appropriately (dress, collegial relations, punctuality, dependability, etc.) in the work situation. As professional employees, graduate assistants will strive to fulfill the agreed upon work obligations. As professional employees, graduate assistants have the responsibility to report inappropriate work expectations or working conditions to the Associate Dean of the Graduate School and/or other appropriate campus entities.

8.2. Assistantships with the CSE Department

To inquire about a possible Research Assistantship, the student should contact CSE faculty members in the student's area(s) of research. Information on CSE faculty's research areas is available on the department's website.

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](#)²⁴ 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](#)²⁵ 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 \(OISS\)](#)²⁶ directly.

10. Policies

10.1. Academic Status

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 between 2.99 and 2.31 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 2.30 or lower are dismissed from graduate standing. 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

²⁴https://www.unr.edu/Documents/administration-finance/hr/hr-graduate/GA_handbook.pdf

²⁵ <https://studentinsurance.usi.com/errors/waiversessionerror.aspx>

²⁶ <https://www.unr.edu/oiss>

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).

10.2. Continuous enrollment

Graduate students must register for a minimum of 3 graduate credits each fall and spring semester until graduation or have an Application for [Leave of Absence form²⁷](#) approved by the Graduate Director of the program and the Graduate School. Approved leaves of absence do not abrogate the time limitations on course work (6 years for a master's degree program and 8 years for a doctoral program). International students may be required to enroll in nine graduate credits each fall and spring semester depending on the requirements of their visa. There are no minimum registration requirements during the summer. All students holding assistantships (whether teaching or research assistantships) are required to enroll in a minimum of 6 graduate credits each semester they hold the assistantship.

10.3. Enrollment limitations

In each fall and spring semester graduate students may not enroll in more than 16 graduate credits. In each summer session graduate students may not enroll in more than 6 graduate credits. In each semester they hold an assistantship graduate assistants must enroll in at least 6 and may not enroll in more than 12 graduate credits.

10.4. Leave of absence

All graduate students are required to maintain continuous enrollment of a minimum of three (3) graduate credits each fall and spring semester. A leave of absence is a temporary cessation of study due to medical reasons or other emergencies during which time the students are not required to maintain continuous registration. Students requesting a leave of absence must be in good academic standing and submit a completed Application for [Leave of Absence form²⁸](#) to the Graduate School before the period of leave begins. Students applying for a leave of absence should not have any "incomplete" grade which could be changed to "F" and have a detrimental impact on their cumulative grade point average. Usually leaves of absence are approved for one to two semesters and may be extended by the student filling an additional leave of absence form. Time spent on an approved leave is included in the time allowed to complete the degree, i.e. six calendar years for the master's degree and eight calendar years for the doctoral degree. That is, **the clock doesn't stop.**

10.5. Reinstatement

Students can request reinstatement to their graduate program after an unapproved Leave of Absence by filing a [Notice of Reinstatement to Graduate Standing form²⁹](#) with their graduate program. Once completed, the program will return this form to the Graduate School for final approval. This form allows the program the option to recommend the student be readmitted to their graduate program based on their previous admission *or* require the student to re-apply for admission which would require him or her to submit a new application for admission and pay the application fee.

10.6. Good standing

Each graduate course must be completed with a grade of "C" or better for the credit to be acceptable toward an advanced degree. In addition, students must maintain good standing with an

²⁷ https://www.unr.edu/Documents/graduate-school/leaveofabsencer_9.23-1.pdf

²⁸ https://www.unr.edu/Documents/graduate-school/leaveofabsencer_9.23-1.pdf

²⁹ <https://www.unr.edu/Documents/graduate-school/Notice-of-Reinstatement-Graduate-Standing.pdf>

overall graduate credit GPA of at least 3.0 on a scale of 4.0.

10.7. Probation

Students whose cumulative graduate GPA is one to six grade points below the necessary 3.0 GPA are placed on 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. Students placed on probation receive a letter from the Graduate School explaining exactly how many credits of “A” are required to raise their GPA to 3.0. Thesis, dissertation, S/U graded credits, and transfer credits have no impact on a student’s GPA.

10.8. Dismissal

If the graduate grade-point total is seven or more grade points below the necessary 3.0 GPA the student is dismissed from graduate standing. Also, if the graduate GPA remains below 3.0 for two consecutive semesters the student is dismissed from graduate standing. Dismissed students are no longer in a graduate program and may not take graduate-level courses without the written approval of the course instructor and the Graduate Dean. 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 their 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).

10.9. Getting an MS while pursuing a PhD.

If a student who is currently enrolled in the PhD program wants to earn an MS en route then the student needs to complete a master’s degree program of study. The graduate director will then send a memo to the grad school informing them of this request and the student can then apply for graduation. For either option (thesis, non-thesis) students will only be able to use 24 credits towards the PhD. If they take the thesis option, the 6 thesis credits cannot be used towards dissertation credits.

10.10. Completing Two Degrees Simultaneously

Students may choose to complete two master’s degrees at the same time, or complete a master’s degree while working on a doctoral program in a different discipline. Students may *not* complete two doctoral programs simultaneously. When completing two master’s degrees at the same time, the student must apply and be accepted to each graduate program; must submit a separate program of study for each degree; must form two separate advisory committees with no more than one member in common; and have no more than 9 credits in common with each program of study.

10.11. Changing Advisors

It can happen that your research interests change over time or that the relationship with your current advisor has changed for the worse. Any student is free to change advisors, but changing earlier in your career is generally easier than later. If you are thinking about switching advisors, you can accomplish this the best if you adopt an attitude of respect for the person who initially advised you or recruited you to come to UNR.

The following are general guidelines for switching advisors:

1. Talk to the graduate director. The graduate director represents the interests of the graduate students and s/he can help you make a better decision whether switching advisors would be good for you. The graduate director can also try to mediate between you and your advisor and help you better understand the pros and cons of changing advisors. This advice is especially important if you are attempting to change advisors toward the final phase of your graduate program.

2. Decide whether you want to switch advisors (do not approach other faculty before deciding).
3. Decide whether you could work with two advisors.
4. Try to work through any differences with your current advisor. Express to your advisor why you are considering a change, discuss whether his/her expectations of you are realistic, and whether they are open to adjusting.
5. Carefully consider the pros and cons of switching advisors as this may involve:
 - a. You can lose your RA or TA position (if your existing advisor provided you with a 10 hour RA ship). Switching advisors is not a guarantee you can maintain your TA ship.
 - b. You need to find a new research topic as continuing your existing research with a new advisor is only acceptable with permission of your old advisor.
 - c. You may receive an unsatisfactory on thesis/dissertation credits that you are currently taking or a failing grade on an independent study with your current advisor if you do not complete your advisors' expectation for that semester.
 - d. If you are a PhD student and you have enough credits you may need to graduate with an MS degree on your old research topic before starting a new research topic with a new advisor.
6. After your decision, approach another faculty member about being an (co-) advisor for you.
 - e. Frame your approach with positive information, such as new interests and new possibilities. Be professional at all times.
 - f. Focus discussions on your interests and goals and not on negative incidents or difficulties.
 - g. Avoid doing or saying anything that could have negative ramifications for your future career.
7. Notify your current advisor and discuss and arrange a timeframe for completing any remaining work with your current advisor before the switch takes place.
8. Arrange a meeting with your new and old advisor to discuss your new topic of research and or overlap on publications in your thesis/dissertation.
9. Regarding Intellectual property claims, carefully consider UNRs intellectual property [policy](#)³⁰.
10. Complete or update any formal paperwork that contains information about your advisor, e.g., advisory forms etc.

10.12. Academic Dishonesty

In order to maintain an academic climate conducive to each member's success in the pursuit and transmission of knowledge, the University of Nevada, Reno, has established a set of policies and standards for all of its members to adhere to. For student members of this community, enrollment at the university carries certain obligations related to activities in the academic setting, including behavior inside and outside the classroom. Specific details can be found on the Student code of Conduct [website](#)³¹.

11. Graduate Student Association

The [Graduate Student Association \(GSA\)](#)³² 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

³⁰ <https://www.unr.edu/Documents/research/oei/ip-ownership.pdf>

³¹ <https://www.unr.edu/student-conduct/policies/student-code-of-conduct>

³² <https://www.unr.edu/gsa/>

through the Council of Representatives, Executive Council and established committees. Graduate students have the right to form clubs and organizations within their programs, departments, colleges, ethnicities, shared interests, or any other constituencies, for the purposes of academic, professional, or social networking, sharing, and advocacy.

12. Acknowledgments

Parts of this handbook's text have been taken and adapted from UNR's Graduate Student's Guide to University, the UNR Graduate School website, and the UNR Graduate Student Association website.

Please refer to [Forms Website](#)³³ for all forms available at The Graduate School.

³³ <https://www.unr.edu/grad/forms-and-deadlines>