

UC DAVIS GRADUATE COUNCIL POLICY

GC2012-02 (Rev 02)

Policy on UC Davis – Master’s Degree Capstone Requirement

Approved – June 1, 2012

Revised – May 25, 2018

Revised – March 6, 2020

At the University of California, Master’s degree programs include a “capstone” requirement (as embodied in the dissertation for doctoral degrees), that is essential in maintaining the distinctive, research-oriented quality of a University of California graduate degree. Master’s degrees are offered as either “Plan I” (capstone is a thesis/project) or “Plan II” (capstone is a comprehensive final examination).

From the Coordinating Committee on Graduate Affairs handbook (August 2019 revision, page 37),

- (1) Capstone projects should be synthetic, tying together two or more areas of specific content that would typically be the subject of a class or a sequence of classes.
- (2) Capstone projects can be individual or group-based exercises. If a project is group-based, the individual student’s achievements and contributions should be assessed through robust means. This could be detailed, for example, through the generation of an individual report by the student, periodic performance evaluations at various points in the project, individual assignments, and/or comprehensive specification of the individual team member’s role that can be tied to specific outcomes in a group report.
- (3) The report should be evaluated by at least two reviewers; and at least one of them should have no direct vested interest in the success of the student (e.g., the student is not the reviewer’s GSR or collaborator).
- (4) To ensure the consistent quality and scope of capstone projects, there should be a single coordinator or adviser who judges the appropriateness of planned projects and their timelines, following guidelines established by the program faculty.

The UC Davis Graduate Council gives the following examples of options for 2 year Master’s degree programs that meet the capstone requirement for a Master’s Plan II degree.

- a. Comprehensive written exam at the end of spring quarter year 1, with an oral exam at end of year 2 for all students to ensure comprehensive capstone testing.
- b. Comprehensive written exam at the end of spring quarter year 1, with a capstone written report at the end of year 2 on an appropriately comprehensive topic.

- c. Comprehensive written exam in winter quarter of year 2, with a 2nd chance for those students who fail being an oral exam in spring quarter of year 2.
- d. Comprehensive written exam at the end of spring quarter year 2, with an option to retake the exam within 1 quarter if a student fails.
- e. Capstone written report on an appropriately comprehensive topic at the end of year 2.
- f. Report of a collaborative Capstone Projects such that the each individual's substantial contributions to the project and each individual's competence can be assessed.

For the chosen option, it is essential to describe how the success or failure of the student will be evaluated, providing information concerning how the committee that will evaluate the student's capstone requirement is assembled.

Alternative procedures can be proposed by a graduate program and they will be examined on a case by case basis by the Educational Policy (EPC) subcommittee of Graduate Council. However, it is of paramount importance that any alternative procedure proposed satisfy the regulations as encoded in the Coordinating Committee on Graduate Affairs (CCGA) handbook (August, 2019 revision; Appendix I, page 36, of <https://senate.universityofcalifornia.edu/files/committees/ccga/ccga-handbook.pdf>), which indicates that the capstone requirement be completed at or near the end of the coursework for the Master's degree. In the capstone requirement ordinarily has a written component (e.g., a written exam or report). Any alternative procedures that do not include a written component must include a compelling reason for why the alternative meets the spirit of the requirement without a written component.