

UCLA



Earth, Planetary, and Space Sciences

GRADUATE STUDENT SURVIVE & THRIVE GUIDE

by graduate students, for graduate students

WINTER 2020 EDITION

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EPSS Graduate Programs At-A-Glance

Your graduate program requirements are set based on the **academic year that you applied**; e.g., if you began your program of study in fall 2018, your degree program requirements are listed under “applicable to students admitted during AY 2017-2018. ***When in doubt, rely on those requirements exclusively.*** Click on the following links and navigate to the tab for the academic year that you applied to see full descriptions of degree requirements.

[Graduate Division Standards and Procedures](#)
[Geochemistry Degree Requirements](#)
[Geology Degree Requirements](#)
[Geophysics and Space Physics Degree Requirements](#)

Students must enroll in a minimum of **12 units** per quarter, including courses, seminars, teaching apprentice practicums, and research units.

Required courses for all programs (as of 2018-2019 admissions):

EPSS 295A/B/C (“Colloquium”): every quarter during academic year

EPSS 235, 245, 286, 287, M288 or 293 (disciplinary seminars): every quarter during academic year.

Strongly Recommended: EPSS 495 – fall quarter of year 1

Degree Program Sample Timelines

The timelines on the following three pages show the typical program of study and time-to-degree (TTD) for the graduate degrees offered in EPSS. They are not meant to be an exhaustive, one-size-fits-all plan; rather they are meant to show important deadlines and activities in your program of study. Variations in funding availability, data collection success, publication turnaround, and other confounding factors may affect the TTD of individual students. TTD for M.S. students may range from 1.5-3+ years; TTD for Ph.D students may range from 4-6+ years.

Official Time to Degree Guide

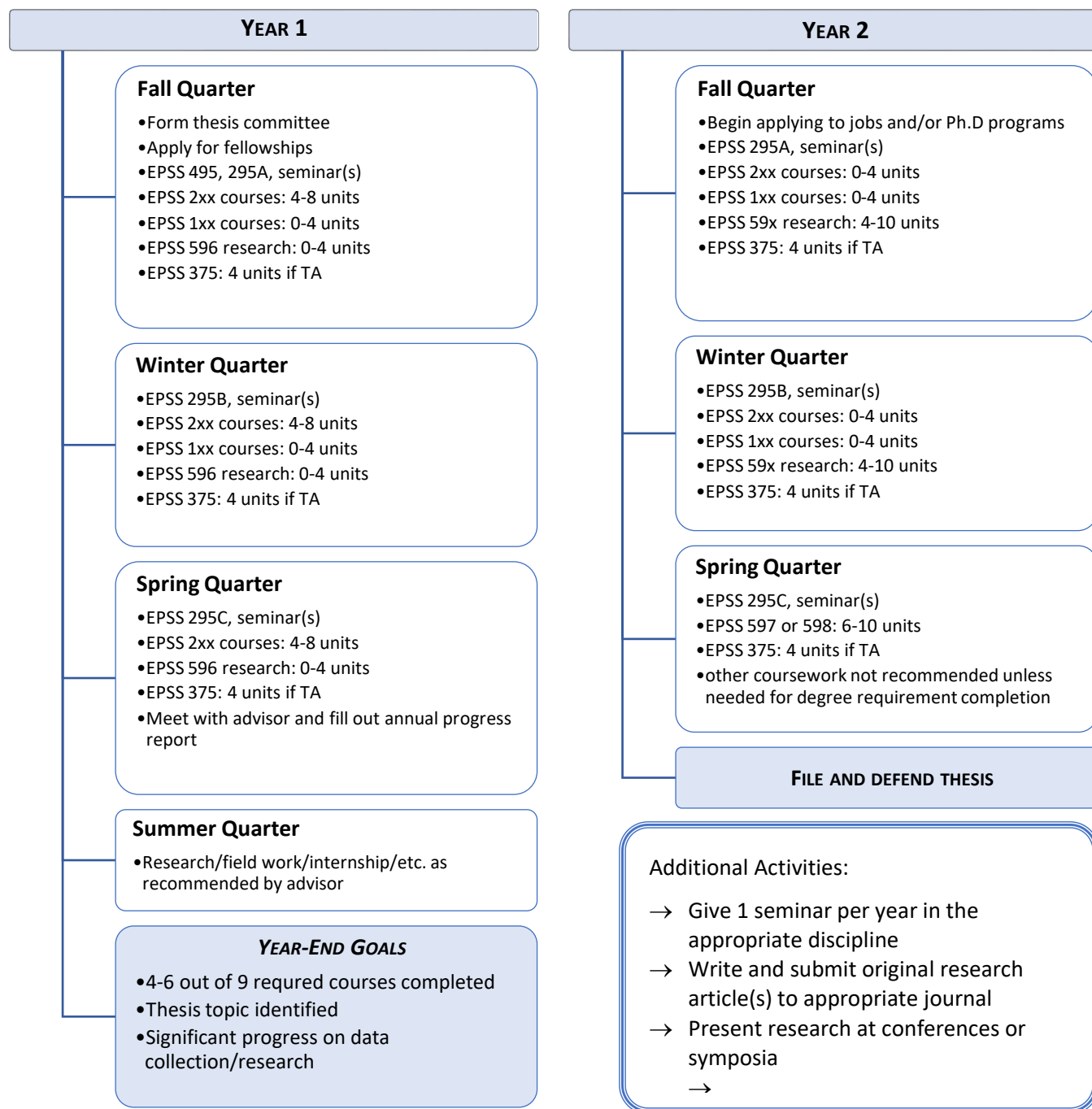
Normative and Maximum TTD according to Graduate Division guidelines for EPSS graduate degrees:

Degree	Normative time to 1st exam	Normative time to ATC*	Normative TTD	Maximum TTD
M.S. (Thesis)	N/A	6 quarters/2 years	6 quarters/2 years	10 quarters/3.3 years
Ph.D	6 quarters/2 years	9 quarters/3 years	15 quarters/5 years	18 quarters/6 years

*ATC = advance to candidacy

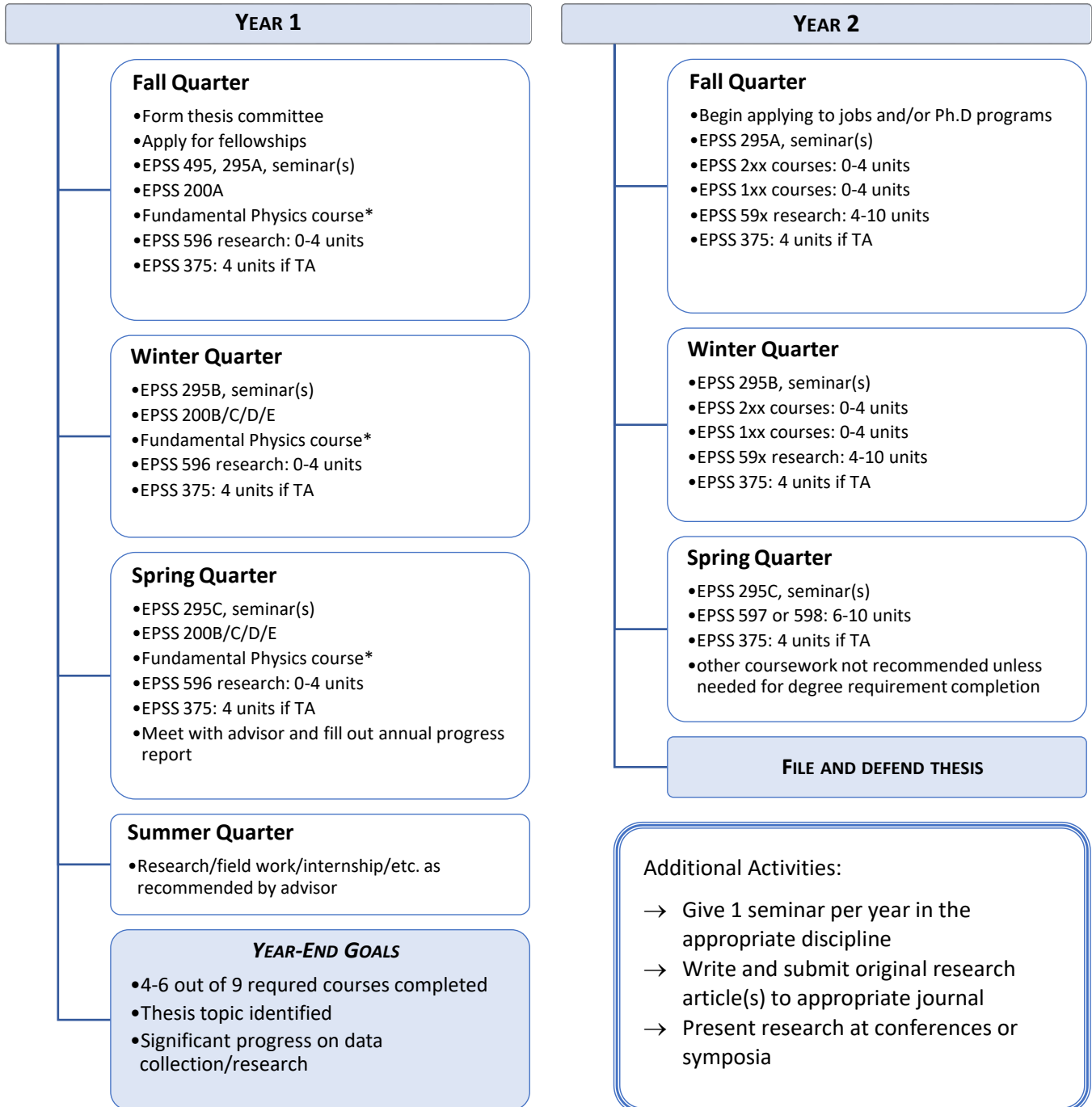
MASTER OF SCIENCE (M.S.) in Geology or Geochemistry

Course requirements also applicable to Ph.D in Geology and Ph.D in Geochemistry.



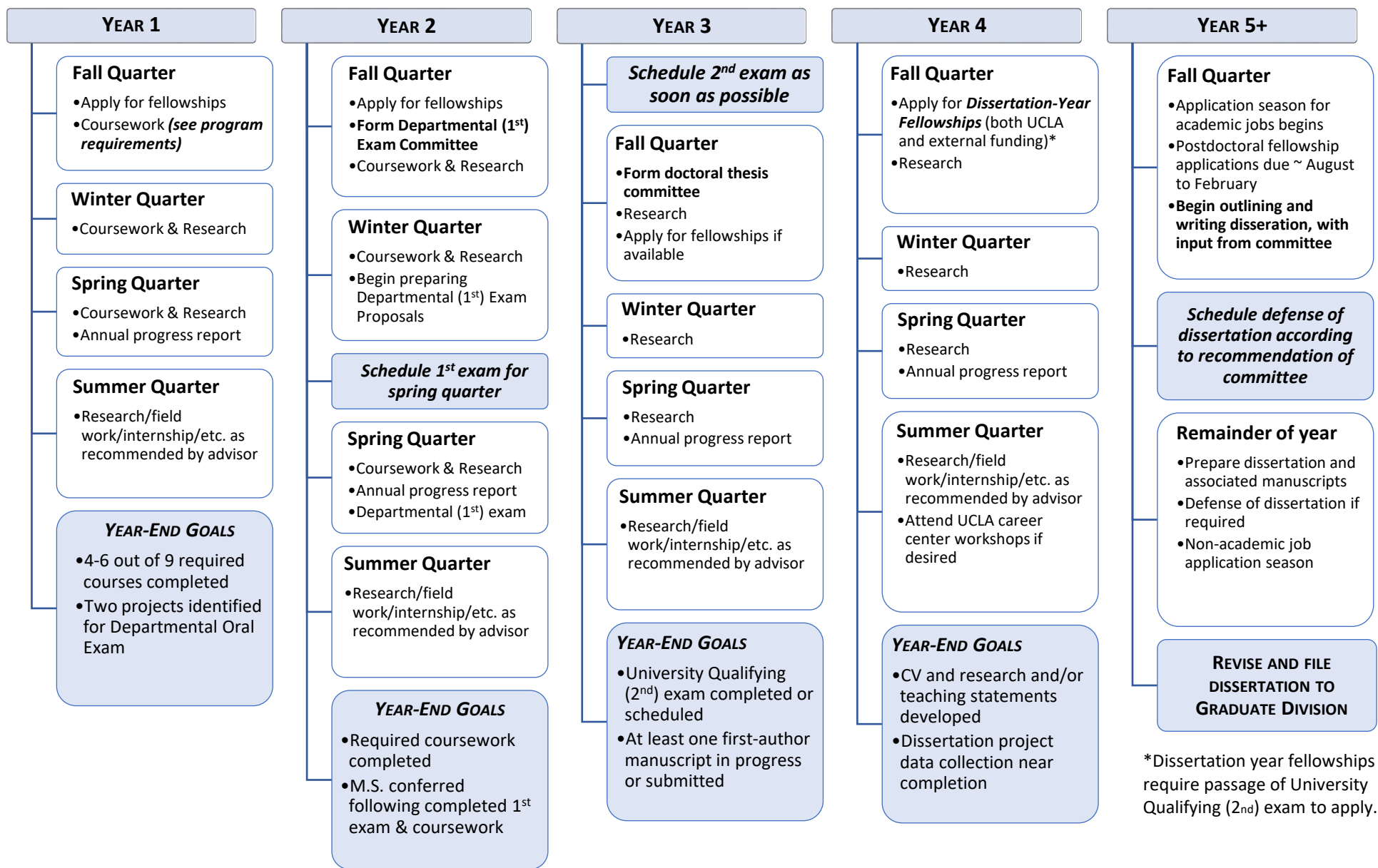
MASTER OF SCIENCE (M.S.) in Geophysics & Space Physics

Course requirements are *different* than Ph.D in Geophysics & Space Physics.



*Fundamental physics requirements are EPSS 200A and 202, plus two from EPSS M204, 205, or 222.

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D) in Geology; Geochemistry; or Geophysics & Space Physics



*Dissertation year fellowships require passage of University Qualifying (2nd) exam to apply.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES: Give 1 seminar per year in the appropriate discipline; present research at conferences or symposia

Degree Requirements and Coursework

FACTS

Degree requirements are based on the academic year you are admitted: for example, if you started grad school in Fall 2018, your requirements are listed under those admitted in the 2017-2018 academic year.

Every graduate student is required to give an **annual research seminar** in their disciplinary seminar (e.g. Geocheminar, Space Physics Seminar, etc.).

All three programs require that you take **nine courses (36 units) of upper-division (100-level) or graduate (200-level) courses**. At least six of those (24 units) must be 200-level courses that can be taken for a letter grade. [You don't HAVE to take it for a letter grade, but letter grade must be an option].

Any modification you wish to make to your degree requirements for courses must be acknowledged via a **formal petition** submitted to the Grad Advisor and signed by your doctoral committee.

Consult your graduate area counselor (faculty member) for Geology/Geochemistry/G&SP for specific questions about curriculum options.

Graduate students can **drop classes** up through week 10 (for a \$5 fee) or after finals (for a \$35 fee; a **petition** is required).

Graduate division requires that you **maintain an average GPA of 3.0**. A single grade <B will not jeopardize your status.

When taking a class S/U, graduate division requires that you have earned the equivalent of a B in the course to earn a "satisfactory" grade. Therefore, use caution when taking a course outside of the department for S/U.

TIPS

The vice-chair is in charge of scheduling courses (including seminar organizers) and should be scheduling every disciplinary seminar every quarter.

The **Annual Progress Report**, completed and returned to you each spring, is how you know if you're on track.

You will not get kicked out of the program without warning. Even exam failures can be appealed. This process starts with the Graduate Advisor.

Coursework can be supplemented with ad-hoc seminars/journal clubs led by faculty. If you see a gap in the available coursework, approach a faculty member in the relevant discipline to see if they can offer a seminar (EPSS 25x; consult the catalog for details).

Faculty may not be up to date on policies and requirements. Refer to Student Affairs Officer (Lauri Holbrook) or Graduate Advisor with questions.

Not every course must be taken for a letter grade to count toward your course requirements (but you must take enough as a letter grade to meet the minimum GPA)

In geology/geochemistry especially: **if a course comes up that you may need, take it when it is offered**. It may not be offered for another few years.

Depending on who is the graduate advisor, course petitions may be treated differently. Some graduate advisors generally approve petitions that are signed by the doctoral committee and faculty advisors. Others are more picky.

Departmental Oral (“1st”) Exam

FACTS

It is not a requirement to have finished all coursework prior to completing your first exam.

Your committee for this exam must consist of three or more UCLA EPSS faculty including your advisor(s).

Exam length is normally 2-3 hours.

Proposals must be no more than 5 pages typed; you are only required to complete **two** proposals for your exam. If your advisor tells you to go outside these limits, seek mediation with the Graduate Advisor.

Possible Exam Outcomes (per Grad Division):

- **Pass:** with immediate eligibility to proceed to the University Oral Qualifying Examination
- **No-pass:** with the possibility of reassessment by an agreed upon date on the basis of a specific written list of requirements supplied by the graduate evaluation committee. This option is meant for students with identifiable and presumably correctable weaknesses, but who are otherwise above the passing threshold. The no-pass option can only be used once for any particular student.
- **Terminal M.S. pass:** allowing the student only to finish any outstanding course requirements for the M.S.; the student will leave UCLA upon conferment of the M.S.
- **Fail:** resulting in a recommendation for termination of the student's affiliation with the department.

You are permitted to appeal an exam outcome with the graduate division. Begin this process with the Graduate Advisor and Graduate Student Affairs Officer.

TIPS

The purpose of the exam is to identify potential knowledge gaps or methodology problems that may be filled in with future coursework, careful review of the literature, or modification of the research plan.

Your goal is to think like a scientist, not to know the correct answer to every question. In fact, your committee will intentionally probe the limits of your knowledge.

Every exam is different. Exact length and nature of the questioning period will vary substantially.

General subject knowledge is fair game, but the most important thing to know is the content, methods, and goals of your project proposals.

“Unknown unknowns” cannot be studied; “known unknowns” can. It is much more important to identify and prepare to address potential caveats and assumptions in the research projects than to try to guess which general knowledge questions you may be asked.

Example proposals from students in similar subject areas who have already taken their exam can provide a good template for your proposals.

Practice your presentations with fellow grad students who have already taken their exam to get feedback and gain confidence.

It's better to say “I don't know” than to take a wild guess. But give it your honest best shot!

You have ultimate control over the outcome of your exam. Practice with friends, take advice from your advisor, but know that only you can ultimately participate and demonstrate the necessary knowledge.

University Qualifying (“2nd”) Exam

FACTS

You are eligible to take your 2nd exam as soon as you have passed your 1st exam, finished all required coursework, and you have formed your doctoral thesis committee.

International Students should take their 2nd exam ASAP to remove Non-Residential Supplementary Tuition fees

The Nomination of Doctoral Committee Form must be submitted to Academic Services, 1255 Murphy Hall, prior to the ATC exam.

- **Minimum Standard of Doctoral Committee Constitution** (Grad Division)

Exam and prospectus formats are at the discretion of the doctoral committee (i.e., ask them how long of a document and presentation they want for your exam).

There is a ~\$100 fee associated with filing the ATC paperwork following your exam. It will be charged to your BruinBill.

Salary for both GSR and ASE appointments rises the following academic year after ATC. Make sure to check your pay stubs to ensure you have been correctly promoted.

You must have ATC to apply for Dissertation-Year Fellowships, both UCLA and external funding. The UCLA DYF deadline is typically in February.

TIPS

The main things you need for your exam are:

A plan for the structure of your dissertation (number of chapters and which topics will be covered in each chapter)

A timeline for how you will complete your dissertation by the target defense date.

That’s it. You do not need to have completed your data collection or written your dissertation to take, and pass, your 2nd exam.

Every committee is different, so the format of the prospectus and exam may be completely different for you than for other graduate students.

The purpose of the exam is to ensure you are on-track to finish your thesis, and your research can be feasibly completed in the remaining time in your program.

Your **thesis prospectus can be used as an outline** for writing your dissertation.

There is no reason to delay your 2nd exam once you have passed your 1st exam and finished your required courses.

When in doubt, ask your committee.

Funding and Finances

FACTS AND LINKS

[EPSS Graduate Payscale Guidelines](#)

[Current Academic Apprentice Payscale](#)

[UCLA Graduate Funding Database](#)

[UCLA Doctoral Student Travel Grants](#): \$1000 available to use to travel for conferences, professional development, and/or research.

First year grad students receive offer letter upon admission *including* promised summer funding for the summer after their first year.

Academic year salary is guaranteed for 5 years for PhD students, but **summer salary is not guaranteed**. It is dependent on advisor sources of funding.

Continuing graduate students receive funding offers in early summer for the following year.

TAXES: [Free tax preparation services for resident, nonresident, and international students](#)

[Process for Obtaining Residency](#) (UCOP)

Ten things graduate students need to know about residency (UCOP)

U.S. Citizens can obtain CA resident status after one year of residency and no longer owe non-resident supplemental tuition (NRST).

Submit a **Petition for Residence Classification by July 1st** before your 2nd year. As soon as you move to L.A., get a CA driver's license, register to vote (if possible), and officially change your mailing address on your bank account(s). Save documentation of your residential address (apartment lease, utility bill, etc.)

In-state DACA (AB 540) students (who graduated from high school in CA) are exempt from NRST.

Non-resident supplemental tuition is no longer required following ATC.

If you have no funding to finish or are leaving for a new job before you file your dissertation, you should apply for [Filing Fee](#) status.

TIPS

Apply for all early grad student fellowships in the summer/fall of first and second year (NSF, Hertz, Ford, FINESST, etc.)

Extramural dissertation year fellowships are available with deadlines generally in the fall of the year before you plan to finish.

UCLA Dissertation Year Fellowship (DYF) application deadline for the department is in February; *you must have advanced to candidacy to be eligible for the DYF*.

Apply for post-doctoral fellowships starting around August of your last year, if applicable.

Don't assume anything is guaranteed until you have it in **official writing** from the department.

A pay cut is a red flag for an accounting error - talk to payroll staff and/or student affairs officer.

It is strongly advised that you **double-check your summer funding status** with your advisor in the winter or spring quarter beforehand.

International students have limited ability to obtain outside employment on their visa.

Industry paid internships can bridge the gap over the summer - you may need to apply for this in the fall prior.

If you think you may be eligible for an award or fellowship that requires nomination, you may need to *request* to be nominated by your advisor or the department.

Students on an extramural fellowship do not have taxes taken out of the fellowship automatically and may be required to make quarterly estimated tax payments to the IRS.

You should not have to pay out of pocket for conference attendance and travel. It is normal and expected for conference attendance to be covered by your supervisor's grant(s).

Department Resources

Websites

Department: www.epss.ucla.edu
IT helpdesk: <https://sites.epss.ucla.edu/helpdesk/>

Department Address

595 Charles E Young Drive East
3806 Geology Building, Box 951567
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1567
On-campus mail code: 156704

Mailroom (3684 Geology)

Grad student and TA mailboxes on north wall; faculty, staff and researchers/postdocs on east wall; researchers/postdocs continued on west wall

Outgoing Mail: Large bin (south wall) to collect on-campus and off-campus mail (department business only)

US Post Office in Ackerman Union for personal mail services

Phone / Fax

Main office phone number: 310-825-3880
Fax number: 310-825-2779

Campus phones:

On-campus calls: dial last five digits, e.g.: 310-825-3880 = 53880

Outside Line: Dial "8"

Voicemail: Dial 222

Printing and Copying (3607 Geology)

[Set Up Wireless Printing](#)

Copy and Print Codes: contact IT Director for personal and/or TA course code.

Computing

[Wifi and Internet Access](#)

[Network Accounts](#)

[Email, Storage, and Web Hosting](#)

[Software Licenses](#)

[Computer Labs](#)

Purchasing and Travel

Purchase orders should be made via orders@epss.ucla.edu

Recharge codes are four-digit alphanumeric codes that refer to the funding source for purchases and reimbursements.

[EPSS Requisition \(Purchase\) Form](#)

You don't have to pay out-of-pocket for major travel expenses (airfare/car rental/hotel). Through [UCLA Travel Services](#) you can book directly with the recharge code for your or your PI's grant. Obtain a pre-trip authorization in order to book your travel needs through the Connexus Portal.

[How to plan your trip with UCLA Travel](#)

Travel Reimbursement for out of pocket expenses (meals, transportation, etc.) must be requested as soon as you return from your trip. Save all receipts (scanning them on-the-go makes it easy to keep records without having a lot of paper copies) and submit the form to the Purchasing Assistant.

[EPSS Travel Reimbursement Form](#)

Administrative Staff

NAME (ROOM)	TITLE	PHONE	RESPONSIBILITIES
Monica Alfredsen (3805)	Acad Personnel Analyst	68590	Faculty/academic/researcher matters; teach evals
TBD (3805)	Chair's Coordinator	53031	Room reserve., events, courtesy parking, directory
Carlene Brown (3806C)	CAO, Dept Manager	59784	Misc dept. issues, general questions/concerns
Casey Chen (3806)	Office Assistant	53880	Assist with personnel processing
Elyse Chou (3806B)	Business Office Manager	53231	Senior fund mgr, financial questions, PI funding
Rick Fort (3845 SH)	Admin Specialist	51418	Purchasing/travel; PCard purchases
Lauri Holbrook (3683)	Student Affairs Officer	53917	Student matters, teaching questions, etc.
Frankie Masi (3845 SH)	Purchasing Assistant	51664	Purchasing/travel; PCard purchases
Jim Nakatsuka (3845 SH)	Chief Admin Officer	53939	Senior fund mgr, financial questions, PI funding
Rod O'Connor (4687)	IT Director	56325	Computer questions/issues; course websites
Michelle Pang (3845 SH)	Fund Manager	61659	Fund manager, financial questions, PI funding
Mike Rathjen (3806)	Fund Manager	44240	Fund mgr; financial purchasing, PI/dept funding
Anthony Sansone (4687)	Programmer/Analyst	53043	Backup computer questions, website issues
Eric Wessenauer (3686B)	Building Manager	51420	Building issues, keys, field vehicles/equipment, emergency planning; classroom demos
Kate McMillan (3839)	Personnel/Payroll Analyst	55661	Payroll/visa questions; postdocs; parking permits

What You Need and Who To Ask

ITEM	STAFF CONTACT(S)
EMERGENCY	CALL 911 OR UCPD: 310-825-1491
Building emergency (facilities-related)	Facilities Trouble Desk: 310-825-9236
Building maintenance problems, concerns, requests	Building Manager, CAO
CCLE issues (course websites)	helpdesk@epss.ucla.edu : IT Director
Classroom demos	Building Manager
Classroom equipment needs – data projector, etc.	IT Director, Programmer/Analyst, Building Manager
Colloquium refreshments	Chair's Coordinator
Complaints/compliments, miscellaneous issues/ideas	CAO
Computer lab accounts, problems	helpdesk@epss.ucla.edu , IT Director, Programmer/Analyst
Copier codes	IT Director
Course evaluations	Acad. Personnel Analyst
Event coordination	Chair's Coordinator
Field equipment, vehicle reservations/rental	Building Manager
IT support, computer/software issues	helpdesk@epss.ucla.edu , IT Director, Programmer/Analyst
Key checkout/in	Building Manager
Lock changes (combination)	Building Manager
Newsletter entries	Chair's Coordinator
Outreach activities	Outreach Coordinator (graduate student)
Parking – courtesy (one-time)	Chair's Coordinator, CAO
Parking – permit (ongoing)	Personnel/Payroll Analyst
Payroll questions/issues	Personnel/Payroll Analyst, Acad. Personnel Analyst
Purchasing	orders@epss.ucla.edu : Purchasing Assistant
Room scheduling – conference, seminar	Chair's Coordinator, CAO
Student issues – undergrad/graduate	Student Affairs Officer
Textbook order questions	Purchasing Assistant
Travel arrangements, reimbursements	orders@epss.ucla.edu : Purchasing Assistant
UCPath questions	Personnel/Payroll Analyst, Acad. Personnel Analyst
Vehicle rentals, reservations	Building Manager
Visa issues	Personnel/Payroll Analyst
Websites – departmental/individual	IT Director, Programmer/Analyst

Campus Resources and Wellness

LINKS

Academic Support

[Statistics Consulting Center](#)

[Graduate Writing Center](#)

[Graduate Career Center](#)

[CEILS](#)

[Center for the Advancement of Teaching](#)

[Classroom mini-grants](#)

Housing

[UCLA graduate housing](#)

[Daily Bruin Classifieds](#)

[Craigslist](#)

[Westside Rentals](#)

Facebook Groups:

[UCLA Off-Campus Housing](#)

[UCLA Housing, Rooms, Apartments, Sublets](#)

[UCLA Graduate Student Housing](#)

[UCLA Housing and Roommate Search](#)

Healthcare/Insurance

Health Insurance: [UC-SHIP](#)

Healthcare: [Ashe Student Center](#)

Dental: [Delta Dental PPO](#)

Vision: [U-See-LA Optometry](#)

Mental/Behavioral Health: [UCLA CAPS](#)

UCLA Center for Accessible Education: apply for any accommodations needed through CAE.

Pregnant and Lactating Student Resources

Title IX Office (UCLA Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion)

UCLA Office of Ombuds Services for mediation and conflict resolution.

Assisting a student in distress (CARE campus resources)

Mindful Awareness Center: free meditation resources and classes

UCLA Recreation membership included in tuition & fees; inexpensive group fitness available.

Outdoor Adventure Center: bike repair, camping gear rental, workshops, trips, and climbing wall

TIPS

It's ok to ask for help: graduate school can be challenging, isolating, and stressful. It is normal (and often necessary) to get mental health care.

Disabled graduate students are entitled to accommodations. This includes physical, mental, and learning disabilities; permanent or temporary.

Pregnant graduate students are entitled to [accommodation and maternity leave](#).

It is normal and necessary to take days off. Do not work yourself into the ground. Graduate school is a marathon, not a sprint. 40 hours per week is full-time. Taking vacation, especially during the holidays, is recommended.

You are not required to disclose physical or mental health challenges to your supervisor; seeking accommodation through CAE can help set necessary boundaries.

Graduate student TA's are mandatory Title IX reporters. This means that if a member of the UCLA community discloses a sexual assault, even if it occurred off campus, **you are required to report it to the Title IX Office.**

If you are unsure about what is available on campus, **senior graduate students can be a great resource.** For serious or confidential matters, the SAO and Graduate Advisor are here to help.

If you are having communication issues with your advisor or a colleague, **the sooner you seek mediation or conflict resolution, the better.** The Graduate Advisor, Student Affairs Officer, and/or Ombuds Services can help.

Where to go when there's a problem

If you have a conflict with...	You should talk to...
Your advisor/PI	Graduate advisor (Abby Kavner) AND/OR Student Affairs Officer (Lauri Holbrook) AND/OR UCLA Ombuds Office for informal, independent conflict mediation
A faculty member (general issues)	Your advisor/PI AND/OR Graduate advisor AND/OR Student Affairs Officer
A professor you are a TA for (in the case of TA-related issues)	Student Affairs Officer
A professor you are taking a class from (in the case of class-related issues)	Student Affairs Officer AND/OR Graduate advisor
A department staff member	Chief Administrative Officer (Carlene Brown)
An undergraduate in a class you TA	Instructor of Record AND Student Affairs Officer (if problem persists)
An undergraduate working in your PI's lab	Your Advisor/PI
Any other undergraduate	Student Affairs Officer AND/OR Undergraduate Advisor (Jon Aurnou)

Other resources:

[UCLA Graduate Division Leadership](#): EPSS's Associate Dean is Susan Ettner

[UCLA Title IX Office](#): If you experience a sexual assault or sexual harassment, or a member of the UCLA community discloses a sexual assault or harassment, you can make a report and obtain supportive services.

[Additional Campus Resources](#) (via the Office of Ombuds Services)