

**MINUTES
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
COUNCIL FOR GRADUATE STUDIES**

MEETING: March 30, 2026

MEMBERS PRESENT: R. Adams, P. Alcalde, K. Bowers, T. Brewster, E. Delavega, V. Levin, T. McCuddy, A. Mickelson, E. Nelson, M. Perez, H. Sable, K. Saghafi, C. Santo, X. Shen, S. Stanley, D. Venugopal, C. Woolner

MEMBERS ABSENT: S. George, A. Guthrie, J. McCutcheon

GUESTS: Rosa Feleg (HIST)

PROXIES: N/A

PRESIDING: R. Kreuz

1. Approval of the minutes from the February 23, 2026 Council meeting

E. Delavega motioned to approve the minutes. K. Saghafi seconded the motion, and all voted in favor.

2. Summary of the March 6 UCGS and March 25 College Director meetings

R. Kreuz reported the following:

A) Graduate catalog changes

- a. Grading change: IP grades eliminated (approved by the UCGS)

This goes into effect for Fall 2026 grades. Students who are already taking thesis and dissertation hours will have a mix of IP and S grades until they complete their degree programs.

- b. Academic standing and termination (approved by the UCGS)
- c. Continuous enrollment policy (approved by the UCGS)

B) Student health insurance update

- a. Enrollment: opt in every fall

The Graduate School has gone back and forth on this, having tried both opt-in and opt-out policies. Both created issues, but going forward, every fall, this will always be an opt in process

b. We were told to expect at least a 7% increase in the premium

C) ADA compliance for theses and dissertations

This is federal requirement, and part of the ADA (Americans with Disabilities) Act of 1990: "Electronic theses and dissertations must be accessible to individuals with visual impairments or other disabilities, as required by the 2008 ADA Amendments Act."

- R. Kreuz reported on some research to find out what this will entail, and found the following list on UC Irvine's website:
- Tagged PDF Structure: The PDF must be "tagged" to allow screen readers to interpret headings, paragraphs, lists, and tables correctly
- Alternative Text (Alt-Text): All figures, charts, and images must have descriptive text that conveys the same information as the visual
- Document Structure: Use built-in word processor styles (e.g., Heading 1, Heading 2) rather than manual formatting to create a navigable tag tree
- Tables and Data: Tables must use header rows for column/row identification, not just layout
- Color and Contrast: Text should be easily readable (high contrast). Avoid relying on color alone to convey meaning
- Accessible PDF Creation: Do not "Print to PDF," as this strips tags. Instead, use "Save As" or "Export" and select document structure tags
- Metadata: Ensure that file properties (Title, Author, Language) are filled out

To facilitate this transition, Beverly McPhail and Ryan Crews are developing templates that students can use for:

- Microsoft Word
- Adobe Acrobat Pro
- LaTeX ["LAH-tek"] (L^AT_EX): typesetting software (complex mathematical formulas)

Students will run their documents through a system that will provide feedback (green/yellow/red).

Timeline: recommended for the summer; required for Fall 2026

D) Graduate Research Forum becoming a Three-Minute Thesis (3MT) competition

The Graduate Research Forum is being combined with the library's NedTalks research forum, in the form of a Three-Minute Thesis competition:

"The Three-Minute Thesis competition or 3MT, is an annual competition held at more than 200 universities worldwide. It is open to PhD students, and challenges participants to present their research in just 180 seconds, in an engaging form that can be understood by an intelligent audience with no background in the research area. This exercise develops presentation, research and academic communication skills and supports the development of research students' capacity to explain their work effectively" (Wikipedia)

Date: November 11

3. Late spring/summer planning

R. Kreuz reminded the Council members of the following:

A) Check catalog proofs: As soon as these are available, S. Warren will notify the coordinators and chairs.

B) Curriculog training: S. Warren is available to provide one-on-one training. The ideal time is late summer/early fall when the new forms are ready.

C) Let us know ASAP whether you will be continuing serving on the council next academic year.

D) Graduate Handbooks: Departments must specify a minimum and a maximum number of dissertation hours in their handbooks and in their catalog entries

- minimum number of hours is six (Graduate School requirement)
- maximum should be set "according to your discipline's norms"

Students should **not** exceed the maximum credit hours for the degree specified by the department (financial aid implications)

If departments do not set a maximum, then the Graduate School minimum will become the department's maximum

4. Discussion: leave of absence documentation

R. Kreuz reported that:

Responsibility for LOAs has devolved to colleges and departments. Departments will need to keep track of students' LOAs with documentation.

DISCUSSION: Should there be individual department forms or a single College form?

It was decided to go with a single CAS form for all LOAs. S. Warren will explore having a Softdocs form created.

5. New Business

R. Kreuz reminded the Council members of these dates:

New student orientation

- On ground: August 17, 3:30 to 5:30
- Virtual: August 18, 4:30 to 5:30

6. Adjournment

V. Levin motioned to adjourn. S. Stanley seconded the motion, and all voted in favor.