



UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

Graduate Program Handbook - 2025/26

Optics and Photonics PhD Program

Reference this handbook to learn about the unique policies, requirements, procedures, resources, and norms for graduate students in the *Optics and Photonics PhD Program*

Patrick LiKamWa • 6/3/2025 • CREOL, the College of Optics and Photonics

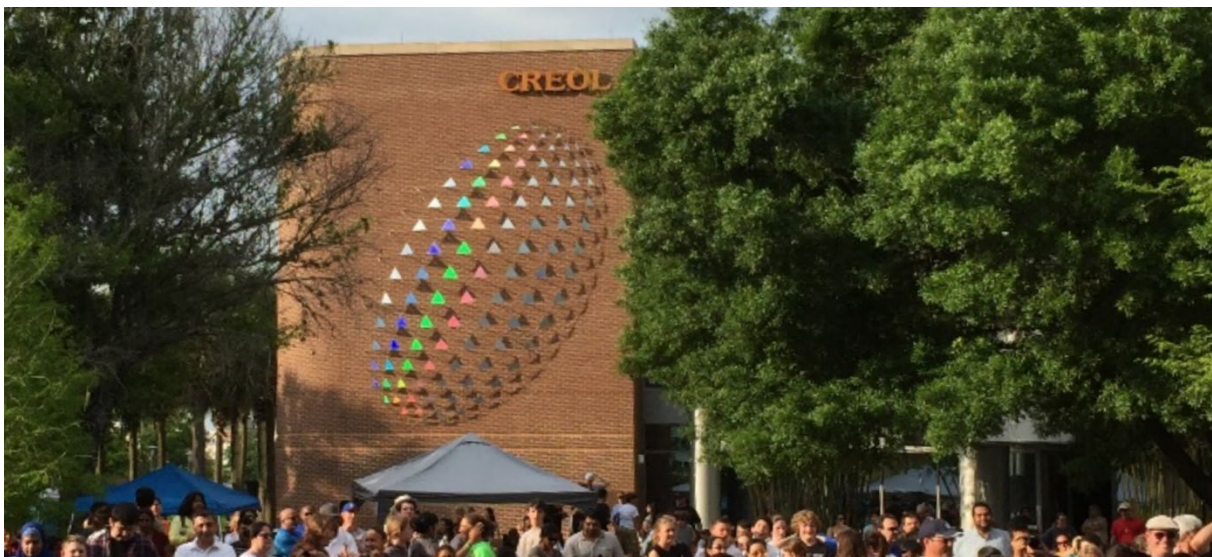


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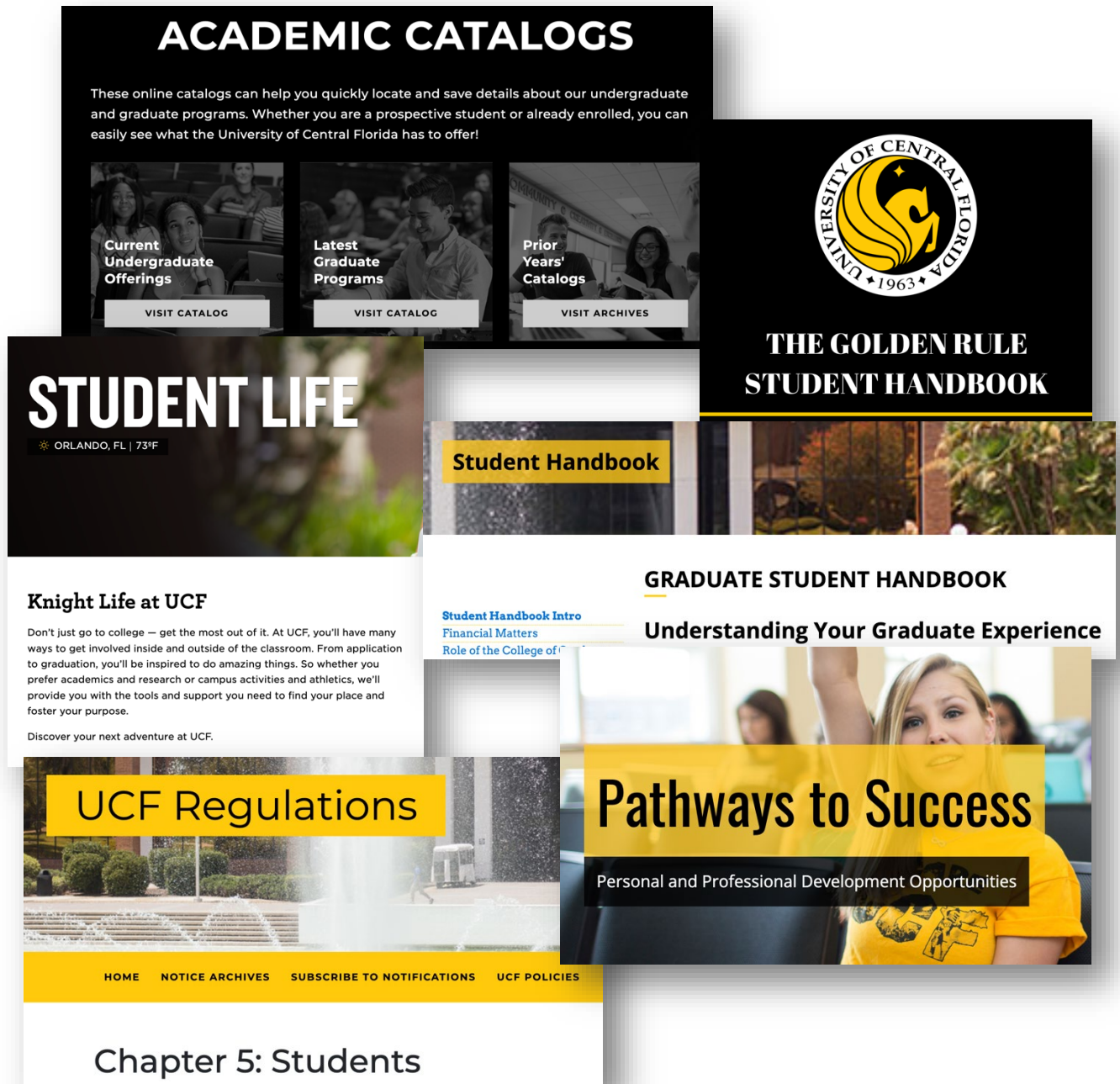
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Navigating Policy and Resources at the University of Central Florida

This handbook is one of many sources to consult as you become familiar with the policies, procedures, requirements, resources, and norms of graduate education at the University of Central Florida.



How to Use This Handbook

Together, the [Graduate Student Handbook](#) and your graduate program handbook should serve as your main guide throughout your graduate career. The Graduate Student Handbook includes university information, policies, requirements and guidance for all graduate students. Your program handbook describes the details about graduate study and requirements in your specific program. While both of these handbooks are wonderful resources, know that you are always welcome to talk with faculty and staff in your program and in the Graduate College.

Who to Contact for Questions

Many of your questions about how to meet expectations and thrive as a graduate student will be answered by the various sources of policies, procedures, requirements, resources, and norms listed in this document. Several key positions in this department and on campus are ready to answer your remaining questions:

Graduate Program Staff

Ms. Yesenia Santiago Irizarri
Graduate Program Coordinator
CREOL rm 208
407-823-4726

Yesenia.SantiagoIrizarri@ucf.edu

Mr. Lawrence Lipe
Graduate Admissions Specialist
CREOL rm 208
407-823-6986

Lawrence.Lipe@ucf.edu

Director of Graduate Studies

Dr. Patrick LiKamWa
Associate Dean for Academic Programs
Professor of Optics and Photonics
CREOL rm 209
407-823-6816 Patrick@creol.ucf.edu

College of Graduate Studies Services

For general graduate inquiries and graduate student services from the College of Graduate Studies, please review the [College of Graduate Studies](#) website as an additional resource.

Onboarding

An orientation day is held during the week before the start of classes for new incoming PhD students. A meeting with the Associate Dean to establish a preliminary Plan of Study is highly recommended. A Plan of Study (POS) is a listing of course work agreed to by the student and the degree program specifying course degree requirements. The

student will be able to change the preliminary Plan of Study until it is firmed up during the second year or later of full-time study with the approval of the Associate Dean and the Dissertation advisor.

Introduction/Overview Section

Complete Name of Degree

PhD in Optics and Photonics

College

College of Optics and Photonics

Department

CREOL

Program Type

PhD

Program Website

<https://creol.ucf.edu/academics/graduate-programs/>

Program Overview Narrative

- The Optics PhD program requires a minimum 72 credit hours beyond the bachelor's degree, of which more than 50 percent should be at the 6000 level or higher. These hours must be comprised of:
- 39 credit hours of formal course work, satisfying the following requirements:
 - At least 30 credit hours must be Optics (prefix OSE) courses
 - At least 3 credit hours must be science and engineering graduate research methods/laboratory courses (waived at the request of the advisor if the dissertation is lab intensive).
 - At least 15 credit hours of Dissertation (OSE 7980)

Program Professional Conduct/Ethics Statement

The central activities and missions of a university rest upon the fundamental assumption that all members of the university community conduct themselves in accordance with a strict adherence to academic and scholarly integrity. As a graduate student and member

of the university community, you are expected to display the highest standards of academic and personal integrity.

Here are some resources to help you better understand your responsibilities:

- [Academic Integrity](#)
- [Graduate Professional Development](#)
- [Plagiarism](#)

Professional Development

As students progress in their academic career, the University of Central Florida also provides many opportunities for professional development. The following is a listing of several organizations offering outstanding development opportunities.

Career Services

- **Career Expo**
Held in the fall and spring, this event provides the opportunity for employers to discuss internship, career, and employment opportunities with University of Central Florida students and alumni.
- **Internship Job Fair**
Provides the opportunity for employers to discuss internship, career, and employment opportunities with University of Central Florida students and alumni through the Internship.
- **Fair and Spring Career Expo**
Statewide Job Fair Joint effort from all Florida universities to provide the opportunity to Florida students to meet with employers and discuss internship, career, and employment opportunities.
- **Employment Prep Fair**
Held prior to each Career Expo, this event provides students with the opportunity to meet with employers to learn more about job search techniques, resumes, interviewing, and negotiating job offers. Employers are available to critique resumes and offer practice interviews. This event is designed to better prepare students for success at Career Expo.
- **Externship Information Sessions**
Provide students with information on how to participate in winter and spring externships. The Externship Program offers students the opportunity to shadow an employer in their professional area of interest to learn more about the career field as well as the organizations culture, products, and services.
- **Career Panels**
Provide students with opportunities to hear employers talk about potential careers and jobs relative to their majors. These employer panels are ideal for anyone considering a major or already declared in a major relevant to the panel's professional field.

GTA Certificate Program

Students receive group and individualized instruction by Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning staff and experienced UCF professors, as well as textbooks and materials. GTAs will attend a 12-week, non-credit program.

Topics include: 1. Presentation skills and practice 2. Balancing the many roles of TAs 3. Course design and management 4. Delivery of instruction, teaching strategies 5. Learning differences among students 6. Instructional technology (hands on) 7. Giving assessment and soliciting feedback 8. Building a peer support network 9. Professional survival skills, ethics, legal issues.

Graduate Student Association

The Graduate Student Association (GSA) is UCF's graduate organization committed to enrich graduate students' personal, educational and professional experience. To learn more or get involved, please visit facebook.com/SGAUCF/.

Graduate Excellence Awards

Each year, the College of Graduate Studies offers graduate students who strive for academic and professional excellence the opportunity to be recognized for their work.

The award categories include the following:

Award for Excellence by a Graduate Teaching Assistant – This award is for students who provide teaching support and assistance under the direction of a lead teacher. This award focuses on the extent and quality of the assistance provided by the student to the lead instructor and the students in the class. (Not intended for students who are instructors of record)

Award for Excellence in Graduate Student Teaching – This award is for students who serve as instructors of record and have independent classroom responsibilities. The focus of this award is on the quality of the student's teaching and the academic contributions of those activities.

Award for the Outstanding Dissertation – It recognizes doctoral students for excellence in the dissertation. The focus of this award is on the quality and contribution of the student's dissertation. Excellence of the dissertation may be demonstrated by evidence such as, but not limited to: publications in refereed journals, awards and recognitions from professional organizations, and praise from faculty members and other colleagues in the field.

For the nomination process and eligibility criteria, see graduate.ucf.edu/awards-and-recognition/.

Advising/Mentoring

Advising for PhD students consists of the formulation of the Plan of Study and adjustments to it as the student progresses along in the program as well as getting familiarized with this Program Handbook. The Associate Dean serves as the initial academic advisor for incoming students.

Additionally, a dissertation advisor needs to be selected as soon as possible and definitely before the end of the following Spring semester. The thesis advisor must be selected from the list of approved graduate faculty and must be qualified to serve as chair of a thesis committee.

Your thesis advisor should be a faculty member in the program whose expertise and project/research interests match closely with those that you intend to acquire. To learn more about the faculty in your program, consider consulting the following sources:

- Our program website (<https://creol.ucf.edu/people/faculty/>)
- Faculty publications
- Students currently in a prospective advisor's group/lab

No faculty member is obligated to accept a student's request to serve as advisor, though invitations are often accepted

Plan of Study

A Plan of Study (POS) is a listing of course work agreed to by the student and the degree program specifying course degree requirements. A specific Plan of Study, which will vary from student to student, must be formulated jointly by the student and their dissertation advisor. Students without an advisor will form their Plan of Study with the Associate Dean. The completed Plan of Study must comply with the graduate catalog current at the time it is proposed. Once completed, the Plan of Study must be approved by the dissertation advisor and the Associate Dean prior to the second term of full-time enrollment. The student may make changes in the Plan of Study at any time with approval of the dissertation advisor and/or the Associate Dean.

Students requesting to transfer credits from a previous institution must note those classes on the Plan of Study. Additionally, students are required to provide the appropriate documentation for transferring credits at the time of submitting the Plan of Study (See Frequently Cited Policies section). Application for transfer of credits must be made during the first semester of enrolling in courses. Requests to transfer credits without the appropriate documentation or after the first semester, will be denied.

Changing Advisor

As the advisor-student relationship is one of mutual agreement, it may be terminated by either party. If you decide that you would prefer working with a different advisor, discuss this with your prospective advisor to seek the change. However, choosing and working with a dissertation advisor is a very serious matter and changing advisor must not to be taken lightly.

How to Get Involved

As a graduate student at UCF, you have a multitude of opportunities to become involved on campus and in your academic discipline. This involvement often enhances your academic, professional, and personal growth through developing advanced leadership, communication, and collaboration skills. It also provides opportunity for professional networking.

Curriculum Section

Please visit the [Graduate Catalog](#) to see the current curriculum for our program.

Timeline for Completion

First Year

Students are usually expected to take a full course load, meaning 9-12 hours, unless designated part-time by the Associate Dean. Additionally, students are required to select a dissertation advisor, get started on research, and begin drafting their Plan of Study. In the first year, students will usually spend more time on courses, in preparation for the qualifying exam, than on research. Students on research fellowships/assistantships must also meet their research obligations. By the end of their first year, full-time students are expected to take the qualifying exam. Part-time students must take the qualifying examination when the relevant core courses are completed, but not later than 24 months into the program.

Students are expected to submit their proposed Plan of Study to the Office of Academic Programs after completion of 9 hours in the program.

Before beginning their second year of full-time study, students are required to select a dissertation advisor. The dissertation advisor must be selected from the college list of approved graduate faculty and must be qualified to serve as chair of a dissertation

committee. Until a dissertation advisor is selected the Associate Dean will serve as the student's academic advisor, however, the selection of a dissertation advisor must occur by the end of the second year of full-time study.

Second Year

Second year students are usually expected to devote a large fraction of their time to research, while typically also taking about 6 hours of formal course work per semester. After completing the core requirements, students should take their candidacy exam by the end of the second year. Prior to scheduling a candidacy exam, the PhD dissertation advisory committee should be formed. Once committee members are selected from the approved graduate faculty, the student is responsible for completing the Request to Form PhD Advisory Committee form and submitting it to the Office of Academic Programs. The Associate Dean must approve all dissertation committees. Additionally, once formed, the dissertation advisory committee may not be changed, unless for some reason a committee member becomes unavailable due to extended or permanent absence.

Third Year

After completing 24 months in the program, students should be engaged in their research. The student must begin the Annual Review progress meetings with their research advisor. Students must continue to complete the Annual Review meetings with their advisor each subsequent year to document their progress towards dissertation defense and graduation. The completed reviews must be submitted to the College of Graduate Studies via their online tool after review and comments by your research advisor. The student will be notified by Graduate Studies when the Annual Review is due each year.

By the third year, an Optics PhD student should be primarily involved with dissertation research and substantially done with courses except for upper level courses that are taught infrequently. Within one year of passing the candidacy exam, the dissertation proposal should be written and examined by the dissertation advisory committee. The student must ensure that The Report of Dissertation Proposal Examination form is submitted to the Office of Academic Programs once the examination is complete.

Subsequent Years

After passing the dissertation proposal students should be entirely engaged in their research, writing papers, peer review journal publications and paper presentations at conferences.

7 Year Rule – Graduation Completion Plan

The university policy regarding length of time to degree is 7 years (21 semesters) or less from the student's initial admit term to complete a graduate program. The Optics and Photonics PhD Program requires all graduate students to complete a Graduation Completion Plan at the beginning of their sixth year in the program, outlining the remaining milestones that they must complete to satisfy requirements for graduation. This completion plan will be reviewed at the beginning of their seventh year and evaluated for reasonable time to completion. The student and advisor are both required to sign the completion plan, and the plan requires approval by the Associate Dean of the college. The Graduation Completion Plan will be filed with Graduate Studies as an official record of the agreement.

Master's Degree Enroute

After completing a total of 30 credit hours of academic coursework, a student in the PhD Program will have the option of receiving a MS degree in Optics and Photonics. The student will need to complete a MS Plan of Study and submit it to the CREOL Graduate Office. That Plan of Study cannot contain any Transfer of Credit courses.

Statement of Graduate Research

As a graduate college for optical science and engineering education and research, the research activities of COP faculty span the spectrum from basic science to prototype development. Additionally, the faculty vigorously pursue joint research projects with industry, academia, and government laboratories. The main facilities of the COP are housed in a state-of-the-art 96,000-foot building dedicated to optics and photonics research and education.

For more information on research in the discipline including a list of research areas, groups, laboratories and publications visit the [Research webpage](#) on the [College of Optics and Photonics website](#).

The COP faculty collaborate closely with other UCF research units, including the Center for Nanoscience and Technology, the Burnett School of Biomedical Sciences, the Advanced Materials Processing and Analysis Center (AMPAC), the Institute for Simulation and Training (IST), and the Florida Solar Energy Center. Several COP faculty hold joint appointments in these and other UCF departments, including Departments of Physics, Chemistry, Mechanical Materials and Aerospace Engineering, and the School of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, which facilitates access to the outstanding facilities in these units and encourages interdisciplinary research.

Patent and Invention Policy

UCF has three fundamental responsibilities with regard to graduate student research. They are to (1) support an academic environment that stimulates the spirit of inquiry, (2) develop the intellectual property stemming from research, and to (3) disseminate the intellectual property to the general public. UCF owns the intellectual property developed using university resources. For further information on UCF's Patent and Invention policies, students are encouraged to reference graduatecatalog.ucf.edu/ > Policies > General Graduate Policies.

Research and Independent Studies

It is the policy of the College that research or dissertation hours (OSE 6918, 7919 or 6908) are graded either "S" or "U" and these do not affect a student's grade point average. Independent studies are not usually taught in the College. For an independent studies course to be approved, the instructor must supply a detailed syllabus, list of learning outcomes and expectations for the student, along with an assessment and grading methodology. Independent studies are usually graded with a letter grade and hence do count in the program of studies. However, students should remember that there is a maximum of 12 hours of research or independent studies that can count toward the PhD.

Research Policies and Ethics Information

UCF's Office of Research & Commercialization ensures the UCF community complies with local, state and federal regulations that relate to research. For policies including required Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval when conducting research involving human subjects (e.g. surveys), animal research, conflict of interest and general responsible conduct of research, please see the website: research.ucf.edu/compliance/.

Examination Section

Qualifying Examination

Before students are eligible to take the candidacy examination, they must first pass the qualifying examination. The purpose of the exam is for the student to demonstrate mastery of the fundamentals of optics and photonics. The qualifying exam is an oral exam that focuses on the fundamental concepts and topics covered in the following four core courses:

- OSE 6115 Interference, Diffraction and Coherence
- OSE 5312 Light Matter Interaction
- OSE 6111 Optical Wave Propagation
- OSE 6211 Imaging and Optical Systems

The exam is waived for students earning an average GPA of 3.5 or higher in the four core courses.

The exam is held at the end of each semester. Students are expected to take the exam at the next opportunity after all the core courses have been taken and before completing 24 credit hours in the program. Students must have a minimum GPA of 3.0 in the four core courses to take the exam.

The exam is administered by the doctoral qualifying examination committee, which consists of several faculty members representing the appropriate disciplines, appointed by the graduate program director or designee. The examination committee may recommend pass, not pass or conditional pass with required remedial course work.

Students have two attempts to pass the exam. Those students failing on the first attempt must retake the exam at the next attempt. Failure to take the exam at the required time will be regarded as equivalent to a failure of the exam. Students who do not pass the qualifying examination in two attempts will not continue in the program.

Candidacy Examination

Students are required to successfully complete the candidacy examination before admission to full doctoral candidate status and enrollment into dissertation hours. The purpose of the candidacy exam is for the student to demonstrate his or her readiness for the PhD program through preliminary research work. The Candidacy Examination should be taken when the student is nearing the end of course work. For full-time students this is normally about one year after completing the qualifying examination.

The exam is administered by the members of the student's dissertation advisory committee who are members of the optics faculty. Before students can take the candidacy examination, the first section of the dissertation advisory committee approval form, which lists the optics faculty members of the dissertation advisory committee must be signed by all members and approved by the associate dean and be on file with the college. Dissertation advisory committee membership is prescribed in the section below. External committee members of the dissertation advisory committee are not appointed until after the student has passed the Candidacy exam.

The candidacy exam is comprised of written and oral portions. For the written portion, the student will be required to write a report and a comprehensive literature survey on a

subject related to their eventual dissertation research topic. The exact subject matter will be determined by the committee chair and communicated to the student at least one month prior to the candidacy exam. The written report should contain between 5,000 and 10,000 words. It should roughly follow the format of a scientific journal paper, containing an abstract, an introductory section that thoroughly and historically reviews prior work in the field, where appropriate, a section that describes the students own research progress to date and a section that describes possible avenues of future research in the field. The student must make the written report available to all committee members at least one full week before the date of the oral exam.

In the oral part of the examination, the student will orally present the report, and through questioning, the committee will further probe the student's competency in the research topic. Students who do not pass at the first attempt must retake the Candidacy examination within 6 months. A student will have only two opportunities to pass. Should the student not pass on the second attempt, they will not be able to continue in the PhD program.

Students must complete eleven of the thirteen required academic courses, and be enrolled in the twelfth course during the term that the Candidacy exam is attempted before Graduate Studies will update the student to Candidate status. This means that 33 of the 39 academic hours must be completed prior to attempting the exam.

Students must pass the candidacy exam and have the candidacy and dissertation advisory committee documentation received and processed by the College of Graduate Studies prior to the first day of classes for the term in order to enroll in dissertation hours (OSE 7980) for that term. Due to the time required for processing, this means the candidacy exam must be scheduled by the Academic Calendar Dissertation Deadline Date in the term prior to updated Candidate status.

Versant Test Requirement to Enter Candidacy

All optics PhD students who were required to meet TOEFL requirements for admission must pass the Versant English test with a score of at least 40 to qualify for PhD Candidacy status. Recognizing the importance of oral presentation skills to the careers of PhD level scientists and engineers, the College of Optics and Photonics would like to help all its PhD students achieve a reasonable level of proficiency in spoken English. Therefore, the college makes available spoken English classes in addition to the Versant English requiring spoken English proficiency to enter PhD candidacy.

The college will pay the fees for PhD students to take the Versant English test. Should a student fail, the college will pay for the student to take the English Accent Reduction Course offered by the UCF Center for Multilingual Multicultural Studies. A student may also elect to take the accent reduction course prior to taking the test. The college will

not limit the number of times the student may take the test before reaching the required score. However, for each student, the college will only pay for a maximum of two attempts of the exam and one Accent Reduction Course. Both the Versant English test and the English Accent Reduction course are offered spring and fall. These will be announced to student periodically, or students may directly inquire to the COP Office of Academic Programs.

Dissertation Proposal Examination

Usually within 12 months of passing the candidacy examination, and after the student has begun research, the student must write a dissertation proposal and present it to the dissertation advisory committee for its approval. The proposal must include the research performed to date and a detailed plan of research required to complete the dissertation. Approximately two weeks after the committee receives the written report, the student will present the proposal orally to the dissertation advisory committee. After evaluation of the written and oral presentations, the committee may either accept the proposal as-is, or may require the student to revise the proposal.

Dissertation Section

University Dissertation Requirements

Students wishing to take dissertation credit hours must have successfully entered candidacy. That is they have completed all course work, taken and passed all qualifying exams, completed all university mandated academic integrity (responsible conduct of research) training, and have all associated documents submitted and approved prior to the first day of classes. Students will work with their graduate advisor to enroll in the relevant dissertation course. Doctoral candidates must be enrolled continuously (including summers). Exceptions to the continuous enrollment policy may be appealed to Graduate Studies. Students may not enroll in more than nine credits in any given semester and must enroll in at least three credits; full time is three credits each semester. Candidates that have met the 15 required dissertation hours but not yet defended must remain continuously enrolled. Graduate policy states students have seven years from beginning the program to complete the degree.

The College of Graduate Studies [Thesis and Dissertation page](#) contains information on the university's requirements for dissertation formatting, format review, defenses, final submission, and more.

All university deadlines are listed in the [Academic Calendar](#). Consult with the graduate director or advisor for potential earlier deadlines.

The following requirements must be met by dissertation students in their final term:

- Submit a properly formatted file for initial format review by the format review deadline
- Submit the Thesis and Dissertation Release Option form
- Defend by the defense deadline
- Receive format approval (if not granted upon initial review)
- Submit signed approval form by final submission deadline
- Submit final dissertation document by final submission deadline

Students must format their dissertation according to the standards outlined in Thesis and Dissertation [Webcourse](#).

The College of Graduate Studies offers several thesis and dissertation workshops each term. Students are highly encouraged to attend these workshops early in the dissertation process to fully understand the above policies and procedures.

The College of Graduate Studies thesis and dissertation office is best reached by email at editor@ucf.edu.

Doctoral Candidate

Prior to passing the Candidacy exam, the student is a candidacy candidate. After passing the exam and forming his full Dissertation Committee, the student is allowed to enroll in Dissertation Research (OSE7980) and they become a doctoral candidate.

Dissertation – Deadlines

The Candidacy Exam Committee consists of three CREOL Graduate Faculty. The committee form must be submitted to the CREOL Graduate Office prior to scheduling the Candidacy Exam. After passing the exam, the student is required to add a fourth member who is not a Graduate Faculty for the College of Optics and Photonics and form his Dissertation Committee. This Dissertation Committee needs to be formed before the students will be allowed to enroll in Dissertation Research (OSE7980). The deadline for filing all the forms are posted in the [UCF Academic Calendar](#) for the semester that the student plans on enrolling in OSE7980 and searching for “Final day for Doctoral committee/candidacy forms...”

Dissertation – Committee Details

The Dissertation Advisory Committee will consist of a minimum of four members. At least three or a majority of the committee, whichever is larger, must be full faculty members in the College and must be graduate faculty approved for doctoral advisory committee membership. See note below for definition of "full" faculty members. See the Graduate Faculty section for a list of those approved faculty members. At least one member, referred to as the "external member", must be either a faculty member in another college at UCF or be a recognized researcher from outside the university whose research specialty matches that of the dissertation. If the external member is a UCF faculty member, he or she must be on the graduate faculty and qualified to chair dissertation in his or her own program. If the external member is from outside the university, they must be approved to serve by the College of Optics curriculum committee. Such approvals are specific to each dissertation. Further questions on the composition of dissertation advisory committees can be answered by the Associate Dean.

As stated above, the Candidacy exam is administered by the committee members who are full members of the college. Prior to scheduling the candidacy exam, these members must be identified and approved by filling out the first section of the dissertation advisory committee approval form. Upon passing the candidacy exam, the external member or members of the committee should be identified and the second part of the dissertation advisory committee approval form should be completed, approved and filed with the college.

Note on definition of "full" faculty members in the college: The college is composed of full faculty members and faculty members from other departments at UCF who hold joint appointments in the college. The easiest way to identify these is by looking at the faculty listing on the College web site. By college policy, faculty with joint appointments count as external members of dissertation advisory committees. However, they are also usually eligible to serve as dissertation chairs but in that case, committees must consist of the chair, three full members of the college faculty and another external member. Questions about the eligibility of committee members should be addressed to the Associate Dean.

Dissertation Progress

Students are expected to successfully progress in their dissertation research each year. Upon admittance into the doctoral program, students are held to a deadline of seven years to graduate before completed courses are considered outdated and removed off the degree audit. In order to ensure students are continuously working on their dissertation, it is required that once enrolling in dissertation hours (OSE 7980) the

student must continuously enroll (including summers) in dissertation hours until actual defense. For more information on the before mentioned policies, please refer to the current [catalog](#).

The College of Optics has implemented a new policy that requires faculty to review the progress of their PhD Students annually once they have completed 24 months in the program. This should be done in the spring semester and completed by April 30, every year. The purpose of the process is that students and faculty should have a clear and common understanding about how each student is progressing towards the degree. The first part of the process will be for students to write a very brief report summarizing their progress towards their dissertation in the past year, providing an estimate of their cumulative progress towards their goal of writing and defending their dissertation. The report should be approximately 1 page in length. Please discuss this with your advisor before starting the process. It is desired that the process be as little burden as possible. The form to use is on the college website/PhD Handbook.

Review for Original Work

The university requires all students submitting a thesis or dissertation as part of their graduate degree requirements to first submit their electronic documents through iThenticate.com for advisement purposes and for review of originality. The committee chair (adviser) is responsible for the scheduling of the review and for sharing the results with the committee. Complete the writing of your dissertation early enough in your final semester to submit to iThenticate.com and allow ample time for your committee chair and advisory committee to review the results and provide their comments to you. Your advisory committee must agree that your writing meets university requirements before your committee chair can sign your Dissertation Approval Form.

Dissertation Oral Defense

In the semester that the student plans to graduate, he/she must discuss with their dissertation advisor. Once the dissertation advisor certifies the student is ready for graduation, the student must ensure that the university notified by filing an online Intent to Graduate Form by logging into myUCF and navigating to the Student Center – Intent to Graduate: Apply. International students are encouraged to seek advisement from the Associate Dean for Academic Programs and the [International Services Center](#) when intending to graduate.

The announcement of the dissertation defense is due to the Office of Academic Programs at least two weeks prior to the scheduled oral defense date. Announcing an upcoming defense can be done by completing the Dissertation Abstract and Announcement of Dissertation Defense form and submitting the form to the Office of Academic Programs. The written Dissertation needs to be provided to the committee

members at least two weeks before the date of the oral defense. To avoid time conflicts among committee members, the oral defense should be scheduled well in advance. After the intent and announcement are submitted, students are responsible for meeting all additional university graduation requirements and deadlines as outlined in the academic calendar. Failure to complete a dissertation format review by the format review deadline, meet the dissertation defense deadline, or submit the dissertation by the final submission deadline will result in removal from the graduation list for that term. The dissertation defense must be open to the public. Virtual dissertation defenses (student off-campus defenses) are not normally permitted. The dissertation defense must satisfy the following:

- The student should be present at the campus location of the public defense.
- The committee chair and all committee members should be present at the campus location of the public defense.
- However, in rare occurrences, one or more committee members (other than the chair) may be allowed to attend the oral defense via videoconferencing.

Any deviation from the above policy needs to be approved by the associate dean of Academic Programs or the college dean.

After evaluation of the dissertation and the defense, the committee may either pass the student immediately, or may require that the student carries out additional work to satisfactorily complete the dissertation.

After the defense but prior to leaving, each graduate student must attend an exit interview. Students may contact the Office of Academic programs to schedule an appropriate time.

Program and Institutional Policies

Student Responsibility for University Communication

UCF uses email as the official means of notifying students of important university business and academic information concerning registration, deadlines, financial assistance, scholarships, student accounts (including tuition and fees), academic progress and problems, and many other critical items for satisfactory completion of a UCF degree program. The university sends all business-related and academic messages to a student's UCF Email address to ensure that there is one repository for that information. Every student must register for, and maintain a UCF Email account and check it regularly to avoid missing important and critical information from the university. Any difficulty with establishing an account or with accessing an established

account must be resolved through the [UCF Computer Services Service Desk](#) so that a student receives all important messages.

Additionally, each student must have an up-to-date emergency e-mail address and cell phone number by which to be reached in case of a crisis on campus. This emergency contact information will be used only for emergency purposes. Also, both permanent and local mailing addresses must be on the record, so that any physical documents that must be mailed can be delivered.

It is critical that students maintain and regularly check their UCF Email account for official announcements and notifications. Communications sent to the UCF Email address on record will be deemed adequate notice for all university communication, include issues related to academics, finances, registration, parking, and all other matters. The University does not accept responsibility if official communication fails to reach a student who has not registered for, or maintained and checked on a regular basis, their UCF Email account. Please ensure that this information is current and that any changes in contact information are made online through the myUCF portal at <https://my.ucf.edu/>.

Continuous Enrollment

All graduate students are required to enroll in at least one class over the span of the Academic year. Failure to enroll in 3 consecutive terms results in dismissal from the program. The UCF policy can be found in the graduate catalog at [Continuous Enrollment and Active Students](#). Furthermore, doctoral candidates (after passing candidacy exams) who have started enrolling in OSE7890 needs to enroll every semester until they graduate.

Absences

Students who anticipate that they may not be able to enroll continuously due to external circumstances should apply for Special Leave of Absence. Specifically, students who are taking courses should apply for a Special Leave of Absence when they cannot enroll in more than two consecutive semesters. Students who are in thesis/dissertation hours should apply for a Special Leave of Absence when they cannot enroll in every semester (including summer).

To qualify for a Special Leave of Absence, the student must demonstrate good cause (e.g., illness, family issues, financial difficulties, personal circumstances, recent maternity/paternity, employment issues). The specific reason for the Leave of Absence request must be indicated by the student on the Leave of Absence Form. Due to current U.S. government regulations, international students must be enrolled every fall and

spring semester. For students in this category, a Special Leave of Absence is only available for documented medical reasons.

Academic Standards/Conduct/Integrity

Students must be aware of appropriate standards of conduct and integrity while a graduate student at UCF. Please refer to the [Golden Rule](#).

Academic Integrity (RCR) Training Requirements

All students admitted to doctoral programs must complete training designed to instill an awareness and understanding of the fundamental issues of academic integrity and the responsible conduct of research (RCR) in a manner consistent with federal regulations. Student will not be able to enroll in dissertation hours or be admitted to candidacy until all academic integrity requirements are met.

To achieve this objective, doctoral students must complete required training. Please see <https://graduate.ucf.edu/academic-integrity-training> for details.

Admission to Candidacy

A student must demonstrate their readiness for the PhD program by successfully completing the candidacy examination before admission to full doctoral status and enrollment into dissertation hours. The Candidacy Examination should be taken when the student is nearing the end of coursework. The exam is administered by the members of the student's dissertation advisory committee or another appropriate committee appointed by the program. Admission to candidacy will be approved by the program director and the college coordinator and forwarded to the College of Graduate Studies for status change. Students must complete all academic integrity training as listed above before the College of Graduate Studies can approve their admission to candidacy. Only after admission to candidacy may a student register for doctoral dissertation hours (OSE 7980). Effective beginning Summer 2019, students must have passed candidacy and have the candidacy and dissertation advisory committee documentation received and processed by the College of Graduate Studies by the date listed in the academic calendar in order to enroll in dissertation hours for that term. Doctoral students admitted to candidacy are expected to enroll in dissertation hours and to devote full-time effort to conducting their dissertation research and writing the required dissertation document. Students in doctoral candidacy must continuously enroll in at least three hours of dissertation coursework (OSE 7980) one semester of every three consecutive semesters in order to maintain active status.

Annual Review

The College of Optics and Photonics requires that all doctoral students complete an Annual Review to measure the progress achieved. This must be completed at the end of each year and be reviewed and approved by the student's advisor and submitted to the Graduate Program Office. The first part of the process will be for students to write a very brief report summarizing their progress towards their dissertation in the past year, providing an estimate of their cumulative progress towards their goal of writing and defending their dissertation. The report should be approximately one page in length. Please discuss this with your advisor before starting the process. It is desired that the process be as little burden as possible. The form to use is on the college website/PhD Handbook. Students must continue to complete the Annual Review meetings with their advisor each subsequent year to document their progress towards dissertation defense and graduation. The completed reviews must be submitted to the Office of Academic Programs for the student's permanent record.

Nondiscrimination & Accommodations Compliance

The University of Central Florida considers its students, faculty, and staff to be a strength and critical to its educational mission. UCF expects every member of the university community to contribute to a respectful culture for all in its classrooms, work environments, and at campus events.

Title IX prohibits sex discrimination, including sexual misconduct, sexual violence, sexual harassment, and retaliation. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find resources available to support the victim, including confidential resources and information concerning reporting options at <https://letsbeclear.ucf.edu> and <http://cares.sdes.ucf.edu/>.

If there are aspects of the design, instruction, and/or experiences within this course that result in barriers or accurate assessment of achievement, please notify the instructor as soon as possible and/or contact [Student Accessibility Services](#).

For more information on Title IX, accessibility, or UCF's complaint processes contact:

- Title IX – ONAC <https://onac.ucf.edu/> & onac@ucf.edu
- Disability Accommodation – Student Accessibility Services – <https://sas.sswb.ucf.edu/> & sas@ucf.edu
- Student Complaints and Appeals– <https://www.sdes.ucf.edu/student-complaints-and-appeals/>
- UCF Compliance and Ethics Office – <http://compliance.ucf.edu/> & complianceandethics@ucf.edu
- Ombuds Office – <http://www.ombuds.ucf.edu>

Enrollment in Dissertation Hours

The university requires all doctoral students to take a minimum of 15 credit hours of doctoral dissertation hours; however, specific programs may require more than this minimum. Dissertation research is considered to be a full-time effort, and post-candidacy enrollment in at least three doctoral dissertations (OSE 7980) credit hours constitutes full-time graduate status. Doctoral students who have passed candidacy and have begun taking doctoral dissertation hours (OSE 7980) must enroll in at least three dissertation hours each semester (including summers, without skipping a semester) and continue doing so until they complete and successfully defend the dissertation. Students wishing to enroll in fewer than 3 credit hours must have approval from their advisor. Students who need to interrupt their dissertation work for extenuating circumstances must submit a Leave of Absence Form to the College of Graduate Studies. Submission and approval of the form must be obtained prior to the first day of classes for the term of non-enrollment.

Golden Rule

The Golden Rule is the university's policy regarding non-academic discipline of students and limited academic grievance procedures for graduate (grade appeals in individual courses, not including thesis and dissertation courses) and undergraduate students. Information concerning The Golden Rule can be found at www.goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu/. Section 11, Student Academic Behavior, addresses appeals of graduate program actions or decisions.

Harassment

The University of Central Florida values diversity in the campus community. Accordingly, discrimination on the basis of race, sex, national origin, religion, age, disability, marital status, parental status, veterans status, sexual orientation, or genetic information is prohibited.

Sexual harassment, a form of sex discrimination, is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature including any of these three situations.

1. Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment or enrollment.
2. Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment or enrollment decisions affecting such individual.

3. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's work performance or enrollment, or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or academic environment.

Sexual harassment is strictly prohibited. Occurrences will be dealt with in accordance with the guidelines above and university rules. Employees, students, or applicants for employment or admission may obtain further information on this policy, including grievance procedures, from the OIE Coordinator. The Director of the Office of Institutional Equity Programs is the campus Equity Coordinator responsible for concerns in all areas of discrimination. The office is located on the main campus, in Barbara Ying CMMS Building 81, Suite 101. The phone number is (407) 823-1336. Policies and guidelines are available online at <http://www.eeo.ucf.edu>.

Plagiarism

Understanding plagiarism is essential to the academic integrity of both programs and the institution. Programs can use this section to describe their philosophy and approach to plagiarism. Description of the consequences of plagiarism can also be included. Reference to the webcourse: "Pressures to Plagiarize" can be provided in this field. This is offered through the Pathways to Success program and is required for all incoming graduate students. Students will be admitted to the course by the first week of classes and will be required to complete it before the end of their first semester.

Students can be directed to the College of Graduate Studies website for information on the requirement and topic: <https://graduate.ucf.edu/plagiarism/>.

Additional Program Details

Financial Support

The College of Optics and Photonics works to provide students the opportunity to fully engage themselves in research education. Doctoral students are typically funded by a mixture of research assistantships, and external, university and college fellowships. The fellowships are awarded to students in the form of an assistantship. In addition to fellowships, students typically receive tuition remission covering 100 percent of their fees.

As with any type of employment, a large responsibility of ensuring continuance of the position rests with the student. This section is meant to briefly cover the requirements for securing funding and renewing an assistantship. Students are encouraged to

reference the current graduate catalog and contact the Office of Academic Programs with additional questions.

- Students must meet the expectations of their dissertation advisors in order to maintain funding. If, at any time, students do not meet the expectations of their dissertation advisor, funding can be canceled.
- Students must maintain good academic standing with a graduate GPA of 3.0 or higher each term. If a student's term or program GPA falls below 3.0, funding will not be available until the student's status returns to good academic standing (GPA of at least 3.0).
- University financial resources are to be used to support full-time, degree-seeking graduate students who maintain good academic progress. Therefore, students not enrolled full-time and/or in a probationary status due to a low GPA are not eligible for funding.

Optics Student Associations

- [CREOL Association of Optics Students \(CAOS\)](#)
- [SPIE, the International Society for Optical Engineering, Student Chapter](#)
- [Optica \(formerly Optical Society of America\), Student Chapter](#)
- [IEEE Photonics Society, Student Chapter](#)
- [Society for Information Display, Student Chapter](#)
- [WiLO, the Organization of Women in Lasers and Optics](#)

Graduation Requirements

The following link references [Commencement](#) details. Students should follow the steps as outlined in the section “Steps to Graduation for Doctoral Students”.

Graduate Student Center

UCF is fortunate to have its own Graduate Student Center. It is a great place to relax, practice a presentation in one of our conference rooms, have your lunch, and to meet other graduate students. A brief description of the Grad Student Center can be provided in this section. The following link can be provided: [Graduate Student Center](#)

Job Search

UCF's Career Services department offers a wide range of programs and services designed to assist graduate students. These services include evaluation and exploration of career goals, preparation for the job search and job search resources. To learn more, visit their website at career.ucf.edu/.

Forms

- [College of Graduate Studies Forms and References](#)
A complete listing of general forms and references for graduate students, with direct links, may be found here.
- [Graduate Petition Form](#)
When unusual situations arise, petitions for exceptions to policy may be requested by the student. Depending on the type of appeal, the student should contact his/her program adviser to begin the petition process.
- [Traveling Scholar Form](#)
If a student would like to take advantage of special resources available on another campus but not available on the home campus; for example, special course offerings, research opportunities, unique laboratories and library collections, this form must be completed and approved.

Useful Links/Resources

- [Program Website](#)
- [College of Optics and Photonics Website](#)
- [College of Graduate Studies](#)
- [Academic Calendar](#)
- [Bookstore](#)
- [Campus Map](#)
- [Counseling Center](#)
- [Financial Assistance](#)
- [Golden Rule Student Handbook](#)
- [Graduate Catalog](#)
- [Graduate Student Association](#)
- [Graduate Student Center](#)
- [Housing and Residence Life](#)
- [Housing, off campus](#)
- [Library](#)
- [NID Help](#)
- [Professional Development](#)
- [Recreation and Wellness Center](#)
- [Parking and Transportation \(Bus Shuttles\)](#)
- [Student Health Services](#)

- [Thesis and Dissertation \(ETD\)](#)
- [UCF Global](#)
- [University Writing Center](#)

Graduate Faculty

An up-to-date list of Graduate Faculty and Graduate Faculty Scholars in the College of Optics and Photonics can be found at: <https://graduate.ucf.edu/graduate-faculty/#cop>

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