



UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

Forensic Science MS Graduate Program Handbook

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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Curriculum	1
Timeline for Completion.....	1
Milestones for Master's Degree Completion.....	2
Mode of Study:.....	2
Time to Complete the Course of Study:	2
Financial Support:.....	2
Research (accomplished in parallel with coursework)	2
Thesis Writing (about one semester after completion of research).....	2
Degree Plan of Study.....	3
Forensic Analysis Track.....	3
Forensic Biochemistry Track	4
1 st Year of Graduate Training	4
Thesis Requirements.....	4
University Dissertation Requirements	4
Thesis Committee.....	5
Thesis Enrollment.....	5
Graduate Research	5
Conduct of Research	5
Laboratory Emphasis.....	6
Laboratory Safety	6
Human Subjects	7
Animal Subjects	7
Ethics in Research.....	7
Patent and Invention Policy	7
Financial Support.....	7
Assistantships.....	8
GTA Training Requirements	8
GTA Performance Assessment	8
International Students.....	8
Graduate Student Associations	8
Professional Development.....	9
Travel Support for Conference Presentation	9
Instructor Training and Development	9

Graduate Student Association9
Graduate Research Forum9
Pathways to Success Workshops9
Graduate Excellence Awards9
Other 10
Job Search..... 10
 Career Services and Experiential Learning 10
Forms..... 10
Useful Links 11
Grad Faculty 11
Contact Info 12

Forensic Science MS

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.

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 Honesty](#)
- [Academic Integrity Training](#) - Open to all graduate students at no cost
- [Plagiarism](#)

Introduction

The goal of the Forensic Science MS program is to serve the forensic science community by providing highly trained researchers and analysts to fill leadership roles within the discipline and to generate new knowledge through research, which leads to advances in the application of science to matters of law. The program consists of two focus areas, Forensic Analysis and Forensic Biochemistry, each comprising an independent track of study.

The direction of each track of study is dictated by the continually increasing complexity of Forensic Science as a discipline, new challenges of terrorism and increasing evidentiary standards. The Forensic Analysis track focuses on improving methods of individualizing physical evidence of a non-biological nature. Studies emphasize the application of modern chromatographic, spectroscopic and micro-analytical techniques to problems in forensic science. The Forensic Biochemistry track has a strong biochemistry-DNA focus to serve the needs of supervisory personnel in DNA sections of crime laboratories. National DNA standards mandate that such personnel have advanced degrees.

Forensic Science is a highly interdisciplinary science, as reflected in the following plan of study comprised of 32 hours of study beyond the BS degree. The interdisciplinary nature of the program makes it imperative that students seek advising from faculty members on the content of courses to ensure that they have the appropriate background to master the course content. Up to 6 hours of graduate credit for advanced courses taken at another approved institution can be accepted with approval of the program director.

Curriculum

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

Timeline for Completion

The full-time student should complete the degree in two years of continuous full-time study, while part-time students will generally finish the degree in four years.

Milestones for Master's Degree Completion

- Selection of a Research Adviser (first semester)
- Selection of a Thesis Committee
The thesis committee will typically be chosen in the first semester (minimum three members) in consultation with the thesis adviser.
- Core Coursework and Electives (two years to complete)

Mode of Study:

In Residence at UCF: Students may be in residence at the UCF main campus, although many courses will be made available in a distance learning format via web delivery.

Distance Learning: Students who are working in a Forensic Laboratory may complete the course of study while remaining in the employment of the laboratory. The distance learning option is only open to those students who are employed in a practicing forensic laboratory.

Time to Complete the Course of Study:

In residence students taking a full load of courses, or nine hours per semester, will normally take one and one-half years to complete the course work.

Distance learners who are working in a forensic laboratory typically take fewer hours per semester and therefore take longer to complete the course work.

Financial Support:

Student in residence at UCF may receive research or teaching assistantships depending on the availability of funding (Please see Financial Support section below).

Students working full time in a forensic laboratory will not be compensated for research activities and teaching services will not be required/requested.

Research (accomplished in parallel with coursework)

Research topics are chosen in consultation with the research adviser.

Students will be expected to produce research results judged worthy of publication by peer review. It is expected that students will present their research results at national and international scientific conferences in consultation with their research adviser.

Thesis Writing (about one semester after completion of research)

Thesis Defense

The thesis defense occurs when everything you have been working on comes together to be presented to your committee. The committee will ask questions of your process and assess the level of competency with the topic.

Degree Plan of Study

The plan of study outlined in the previous section is designed to provide the student with a background in their chosen specialization (Forensic Analysis or Forensic Biochemistry track) to allow them to complete an independent research project and to give them the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to function as a forensic science professional after leaving UCF.

One of the primary means of education and training in the Forensic Science MS Program is achieved through successful completion of an original research project, in close mentorship with the research adviser and the presentation and defense of the MS thesis. This intense research experience provides the education and training necessary for the student to substantiate his/her expertise and develop the skills necessary to become an independent professional. Furthermore, it is anticipated that the research experience will serve to better prepare the student to solve problems of a research nature which they are likely to encounter as a practicing forensic professional.

The following schedule of courses assumes full-time enrollment by students in residence at UCF. Schedules for students exercising the distance learning option will depend on the student's course load.

Forensic Analysis Track

1st Year of Graduate Training

Fall	Spring	Summer
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CHS 6513: QA and Bioinformation (3)• CHM 6492: Atomic Spectroscopy (3)• STA 5206: Statistical Analysis (3) (or equivalent)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CHS 5596: The Forensic Expert in the Courtroom (3)• CHS 5502: Principles of Forensic Science (3)• CHM 6918: Directed Research (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CHS 5235: Applied Molecular Spectroscopy (3)• CHM 6918: Directed Research (3)
Semester Total: 9 credit hours	Semester Total: 9 credit hours	Semester Total: 6

2nd Year of Graduate Training

Fall	Spring
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CHS 6539C: Forensic Analysis Laboratory (4)• CHS 6971: Thesis (2)• CHM 6918: Directed Research (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CHS 6548: Explosives and Accelerants Analysis (3)• CHS 6971: Thesis (5)• CHM 6918: Directed Research (1)
Semester Total: 9 credit hours	Semester Total: 9 credit hours

Forensic Biochemistry Track

1st Year of Graduate Training

Fall	Spring	Summer
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CHS 6513: QA and Bioinformation (3)• CHS 6535: Forensic Molecular Biology (3)• CHS 6536: Population Genetics and Genetic Data Analysis (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CHS 5596: The Forensic Expert in the Courtroom (3)• CHS 5502: Principles of Forensic Science (3)• BCH 6740: Advanced Biochemistry (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• PCB 5665C: Human Genetics (4)• CHS 6971: Thesis (2)
Semester Total: 9 credit hours	Semester Total: 9 credit hours	Semester Total: 6 credit hours

2nd Year of Graduate Training

Fall	Spring
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CHS 6535L: Forensic Analysis of Biological Materials (3)• CHS 6971: Thesis (6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CHS 6971 Thesis (3)
Semester Total: 9 credit hours	Semester Total: 3 credit hours

Thesis Requirements

University Dissertation Requirements

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. A step-by-step completion guide is also available on [Thesis and Dissertation Services](#) Site.

All university deadlines are listed in the [Academic Calendar](#). Your program or college may have other earlier deadlines; please check with your program and college staff for additional 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 well before the defense
- 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](#). Formatting questions or issues can be submitted to the Format Help page in the [Thesis and Dissertation Services](#) site. Format reviews and final submission must be completed in the [Thesis and Dissertation Services](#) site. The Dissertation Approval Form is also available in the Thesis and Dissertation Services site.

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.

Thesis Committee

Each student will select a faculty member to serve as their thesis adviser within the first semester after admission into the program. The thesis adviser will direct the student in the selection of courses and mentor the student in research methods and professional development. With the aid of the thesis adviser, the student will establish a committee comprised of two UCF faculty members and at least one other acknowledged forensic expert in the field. The subject-area expert may be a UCF faculty member or an expert from outside the university, so long as the expert meets the requirements established by UCF for external advisory committee members. The thesis committee must be reviewed and approved by the College of Sciences Associate Dean of Graduate Studies. Students must submit an approval form that can be found online at sciences.ucf.edu/graduate/current-students/forms/. For more details about the thesis committee, please refer to the UCF Graduate Catalog.

The student will present his/her thesis for examination by the committee. The thesis must be judged worthy of publication by the review committee and may not be submitted for examination until approved. For students choosing to conduct research at non-UCF sites, the thesis adviser will visit the student's laboratory where the research is to be performed, before the research begins and on a regular basis until the work is complete. The thesis adviser will additionally establish contact with the student's supervisor prior to the student initiating the program to ascertain support for the student's use of local laboratory facilities to accomplish the required research portion of the plan of study.

In the event that a student feels that it is necessary to change his/her thesis adviser, proceeding with the change may only be done with the full knowledge and consultation of the program/track coordinator. The student should be advised that changing thesis adviser can result in a significant disruption in progress toward the degree and may necessitate a fresh beginning in his/her laboratory research project.

Thesis Enrollment

Prior to enrollment into CHM 6971 Thesis, your thesis committee must be reviewed and approved by the College of Sciences Associate Dean of Graduate Studies.

To be considered full-time after completion of coursework, students must be continuously enrolled in three hours of thesis research every semester (including summers) until successful defense and graduation. This enrollment each semester reflects the expenditure of university resources. Students that wish to enroll in part-time hours must consult with their adviser. For more details about enrollment, please refer to the UCF Graduate Catalog: ucf.catalog.acalog.com/index.php?catoid=4 > Policies > Master's Program Policies > Thesis Requirements > Thesis Enrollment Requirement and the UCF Graduate Catalog: ucf.catalog.acalog.com/index.php?catoid=4 > General Policies > Full-time Enrollment Requirements.

Graduate Research

This section does not cover all aspects of research. If you have questions about graduate research, please contact your adviser. You may also visit sciences.ucf.edu/chemistry/research/ to learn about the department's current forensic research.

Conduct of Research

All graduate research undertaken in fulfillment of the requirements of this program shall be conducted in a responsible manner with an emphasis on safety for the researcher, fellow students, faculty and the University community. All research will be conducted in accordance with guidelines established by the University to safeguard personnel and the environment. The University guidelines for chemical safety may be reviewed on line

at ehs.ucf.edu/. Students conducting research in residence at the UCF campus may be required to complete laboratory safety training conducted by the UCF office of Environmental Health and Safety (ehs.ucf.edu/). The research advisor may require additional training and/or implement additional safety rules to protect the welfare of the research student. It is ultimately incumbent upon the student to understand the dangers and potential hazards associated with their research and to take appropriate precautions to insure the safety of themselves and others. Failure to meet stated requirements will be grounds for dismissal from the program and possibly from the University following appropriate review by the designated authorities.

Research conducted under this program will be original research. Plagiarism, fabrication of results, and all other forms of dishonesty will not be tolerated and are grounds for dismissal from the University under the “Golden Rule” (goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu/). Additional information is given below under the “Ethics in Research” topic.

Laboratory Emphasis

This program maintains a strong emphasis on the laboratory skills that you will utilize in your professional career after leaving UCF. Laboratory research is required of all students in this program. A substantial portion of your time with us will be spent on an independent research project. These projects often push back the frontiers of Forensic Science and they always promote free and open exchange of ideas with faculty and your peer group.

Some students in this program are in-residence at the UCF campus in Orlando, while others are working in forensic laboratories across the United States. The distance learning component of the program will provide you with a broader view of Forensic Science through exposure to students from different geographical areas, with vastly different backgrounds and representing all facets of the discipline. You will establish new colleagues and begin to develop a professional network while earning an advanced degree in Forensic Science.

Laboratory Safety

In addition to the requirements described above (under Conduct of Research), the following specific requirements apply.

1. Approved eye protection is required to be worn in the laboratory continuously. This means eye covering which will protect against both impact and splashes. Safety glasses or goggles must be rated Z87 in order to be approved protective eyewear for lab use. Approved eyewear is available through the campus bookstore, Home Depot or Lowes. If you should get a chemical in your eye, wash with flowing water for a minimum of 15 minutes and inform the instructor or your research advisor.
2. Full protection for the body must be provided by a full length lab coat with long sleeves, long pants or a long skirt, and shoes. Shoes must be closed toe; no sandals are allowed. Keep long hair confined while in the laboratory. If you wear contacts, please wear your glasses instead with safety glasses that will cover them, unless medically not advised. Both latex and nitrile gloves are available in the bookstore for your use.
3. Do not perform unauthorized experiments. No horseplay in laboratories. No smoking allowed. Wash your hands before leaving the laboratory.
4. Do not taste anything in the laboratory. This applies to food as well as chemicals. Do not use the laboratory as an eating place, and do not eat or drink from laboratory glassware.
5. Exercise great care in noting the odor or fumes and avoid breathing fumes of any kind. Use fume hoods as required with blower on and the vertical safety glass down at the appropriate level.
6. Do not use mouth suction in filling pipettes with chemical reagents. Use a suction bulb.
7. In case of fire or accident, call the instructor or research advisor at once. Note location of fire extinguisher, safety shower, and eyewash, so that you can use it if needed. Wet towels are very efficient for smothering fires. When the alarm sounds evacuate the building.
8. For treatment of cuts, burns, or inhalation of fumes you must go to the Student Health Center, located near the Biology building. Your instructor or research advisor will arrange for transport or an escort if needed.

9. Do not force glass tubing into rubber stoppers without protection for hands. Lubricate the tubing with water and use a towel to cover the tubing. Fire-polish the ends of all glass tubing.

Human Subjects

If the student chooses to conduct research that involves human subjects (i.e., surveys, interviews, etc.), he or she must gain Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval prior to beginning the study. For access to the IRB submission form and sample consent forms, please visit the Office of Research website: research.ucf.edu/ > Research Integrity & Compliance > Institutional Review Board (IRB) > Investigators.

Animal Subjects

If the student chooses to conduct research that involves animal subjects, he or she must gain Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) approval prior to beginning the study. For access to the IACUC submission forms, please visit the Office of Research website: research.ucf.edu/ > Research Integrity & Compliance > Office of Animal Welfare > Animal Use Approval Form.

If you have questions regarding human or animal subjects, please contact an IRB Coordinator at (407) 823-2901.

Ethics in Research

Researchers in every discipline have a responsibility for ethical awareness as the status of the profession rests with each individual researcher. It is important to be honest and ethical in conducting research as well as in taking classes. The ethical collection and use of information includes, but is by no means limited to, the following: confidentiality, accuracy, relevance, self-responsibility, honesty, and awareness of conflict of interest. The University of Arizona's Code of Research Ethics provides our students with guidelines for responsible practice in research. This code of ethics can be found here: facultygovernance.arizona.edu/resource/code-research-ethics.

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. The graduate student as inventor will according to this policy share in the proceeds of the invention.

The full policy is available online from the [Graduate Catalog](#).

Financial Support

Students with qualifying assistantships or university-wide fellowships will receive financial packages that include an assistantship or fellowship stipend, tuition remission, and health insurance. Qualifying fellowships are accompanied by tuition waivers. Qualifying assistantships include single appointments of at least .50 FTE (20 hrs/week) or two appointments of at least .25 FTE (10 hrs/week). Tuition remission is in the form of either tuition waivers or tuition payments that cover in-state (resident) tuition. Non-resident students with financial packages are not charged out-of-state tuition or the non-resident financial aid fee.

For additional information about funding for graduate school, please visit the College of Graduate Studies Funding website at graduate.ucf.edu/funding/.

If you are interested in applying for loans or externally funded need-based awards, visit the Office of Student Financial Assistance website at finaid.ucf.edu/ and complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which is available January 1 each year.

Assistantships

Graduate assistantship appointments offer opportunities for students to engage in research, teaching, and other projects during their graduate study. These are paid appointments that promote the missions of the University. For eligibility, students must be accepted as a graduate student in a degree program and be enrolled full-time.

For more information concerning graduate assistantships, see the Financial Information > Graduate Assistantships section of the current Graduate Catalog at ucf.catalog.acalog.com/index.php?catoid=4 or talk to the Graduate Program Director to learn about specific eligibility and application guidelines.

Master's students can be offered tuition support for a maximum of five semesters.

GTA Training Requirements

If the student is hired in the position of Graduate Teaching Associate, Assistant or Grader, there are training requirements that must be met in order for the contract to be processed. The training, offered by UCF's Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning, covers course design, learning theories, ethics, and other topics relevant to preparing GTAs for their responsibilities.

Students who are non-native speakers of English and do not have a degree from a U.S. institution must pass the SPEAK test before they will be permitted to teach as Graduate Teaching Associates (position code 9183) or Graduate Teaching Assistants (position code 9184). The SPEAK test is not required for students who will be appointed as a Graduate Teaching Grader (position code 9187).

See graduate.ucf.edu/students/ for training requirements and registration instructions.

GTA Performance Assessment

At the completion of each semester the student is employed as a GTA, the student's performance will be evaluated by the faculty adviser. These assessments will be used to review strengths and weaknesses in the student's performance in preparation for future employment.

International Students

Several types of employment are available to international students, including on-campus employment. For more information about the types of employment available to international students, and the requirements and restrictions based on visa-type, please see the International Affairs and Global Strategies' website: globalucf.com/.

Graduate Student Associations

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/groups/UCFgsa/.

For individual department or graduate program organizations, please see program adviser.

Professional Development

Travel Support for Conference Presentation

Travel funds for presentation of research results at conferences may be provided by the research advisor, depending on availability of funds and at his/her discretion. In addition, the College of Graduate Studies offers a Graduate Travel Award that provides funding for master's, specialist, and doctoral students to deliver a research paper or comparable creative activity at a professional meeting. Students must be the primary author and presenter. More information can be found on the Graduate Studies website at graduate.ucf.edu/.

Instructor Training and Development

The Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning (FCTL) promotes excellence in all levels of teaching at the University of Central Florida. They offer several programs for the professional development of Graduate Teaching Assistants at UCF.

- **GTA Training** (mandatory for employment as a GTA)
This training provides information and resources for students who will be instructors in a two-day workshop. The seminars cover a variety of topics, including course development, learning theories, lecturing, and academic freedom. Those interested in additional training can also attend an optional training session that normally follows the mandatory training.
- **Preparing Tomorrow's Faculty Program**
This certificate program (12-weeks) consists of group and individualized instruction by Faculty Center staff and experienced UCF professors. Textbooks and materials are provided. For more information: fctl.ucf.edu/ > Events > GTA Programs or call 407/823-3544.

Graduate Student Association

facebook.com/groups/UCFgsa/

Graduate Research Forum

Sponsored by the College of Graduate Studies, the Research Forum is an opportunity for students to showcase their research and creative projects and to receive valuable feedback from faculty judges. Awards for best poster and best oral presentation in each category will be given and all participants will receive recognition. For more information, contact researchweek@ucf.edu.

Pathways to Success Workshops

Coordinated by the College of Graduate Studies, the Pathways to Success program offers free development opportunities for graduate students including workshops in Academic Integrity, Graduate Grantsmanship, Graduate Teaching, Personal Development, Professional Development, and Research. For more information and how to register, please visit graduate.ucf.edu/pathways-to-success/.

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 instructor 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 Master's Thesis – It recognizes graduate students for excellence in the master's thesis. The focus of this award is on the quality and contribution of the student's thesis research. Excellence of the master's thesis 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. The university award will be forwarded to a national-level competition sponsored by the Council of Southern Graduate Schools (CSGS) when the thesis discipline corresponds to the annual submission request.

For the nomination process and eligibility criteria, see the College of Graduate Studies website graduate.ucf.edu/awards-and-recognition/.

Other

For information about the Council of Southern Graduate Schools (CSGS) thesis and dissertation awards, see their website: csgs.org/ > Awards.

For grant-proposal writing resources: uwc.cah.ucf.edu/.

Job Search

Career Services and Experiential Learning

career.ucf.edu/

Graduate career development issues are unique and include evaluating academic and nonacademic career choices, discussing graduate school effect on career choices, as well as learning, evaluating, and refining networking and interviewing skills. Whatever your needs, the offices of Career Services and Experiential Learning offer services and resources to aid in the career exploration and job search of master's and doctoral students in every academic discipline.

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

- [Forensic Science MS](#)
- [College of Sciences](#)
- [College of Graduate Studies](#)
- [Academic Calendar](#)
- [Bookstore](#)
- [Campus Map](#)
- [Computer Labs](#)
- [Counseling Center](#)
- [Financial Assistance](#)
- [Golden Rule Student Handbook](#)
- [Graduate Catalog](#)
- [Graduate Student Association](#)
- [Graduate Student Center](#)
- [Housing and Residence Life](#)
- [Housing, off campus](#)
- [Knights Email](#)
- [Learning Online](#)
- [Library](#)
- [NID Help](#)
- [Pathways to Success](#)
- [Recreation and Wellness Center](#)
- [Register for Classes](#)
- [Shuttles Parking Services](#)
- [Student Health Services](#)
- [Thesis and Dissertation \(ETD\)](#)
- [UCF Global](#)
- [UCF IT](#)
- [University Writing Center](#)

Grad Faculty

Asterisk = has previous committee experience, which qualifies the person to serve as vice chair

Ballantyne, John *

College: College of Sciences

Disciplinary affiliations: Forensic Science

Research interests: Forensic Genetics, Y Chromosome Analysis, Enhanced DNA Typing Techniques, Single Cell Analysis, RNA Profiling Applications

Contact Info: Jack.Ballantyne@ucf.edu

Websites: http://chemistry.cos.ucf.edu/faculty_ballantyne.php

Caranto, Jonathan

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Disciplinary affiliations: Chemistry and Forensic Science

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Sigman, Michael *

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