



UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

Computer Science MS Graduate Program Handbook

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Computer 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 Master of Science in Computer Science program provides students with an in-depth education geared toward meeting the needs of business and industry in Florida and throughout the United States, as well as preparing students for higher level graduate studies and research. The program's goal is to produce graduates with a high level of competency in understanding, applying, and enunciating the modern concepts, principles, methods, and theories necessary for the design and implementation of computing systems.

Students in the program receive a broad background in the areas of programming systems and languages, computer architecture, and computer science theory while specializing in a research area in either applied or theoretical computer science. Students successfully completing this program will have exhibited breadth as well as depth of capability involving both theoretical aspects of computer science and practical considerations of computing.

Please visit the [Master of Science in Computer Science](#) program for detailed description of degree requirements. A current list of CS courses can be found at [Graduate CS Courses](#). Typically, students can begin registering for Summer, Fall, and Spring of the following year in mid-late March. See [UCF Registration Practices](#) to get an idea of how to do this. In all programs, students must maintain a 3.0 GPA or better in all coursework taken since admission into the program.

Master's students may choose one of two options – the thesis option or the non-thesis option. Both are 30-semester-hour programs. The latter requires slightly more coursework and, of course, does not require that a thesis be written. MS non-thesis option students must complete a culminating experience in the form of a portfolio as specified by the program's graduate committee. Students must receive a 3.0 GPA or higher in all courses.

MS Degree

- At least 30 semester hours of credit at the 5000-6000 level. At least half of these must be at the 6000 level, and under no circumstances can they contain undergraduate credit. Up to 6 credit hours of approved independent study (XXX 6908) or directed research (XXX 6918) may be counted toward degree requirements for the non-thesis option.

- Any approved pair of Computer Science courses from a single research area that includes at least one 6000-level course (6 credit hours). See [Graduate Catalog](#) for examples of approved pairs (Note that these are only examples.)
- CDA 5106 and COT 5405, both with a grade of B (3.0) or better.
- At most 6 credit hours of non-Computer Science coursework. Students must obtain approval prior to taking outside courses.
- Applicants without a strong undergraduate background in Computer Science must demonstrate an understanding of the material covered in certain upper-division undergraduate courses. See [Graduate Catalog](#) for specific courses.
- Students must have an academic adviser appointed and an official plan of study submitted before completing 9 credit hours of course work. This requirement for a completed plan of study is strictly enforced. For students in non-thesis option, the academic advisor is by default the program Graduate Coordinator. For thesis students, the thesis research advisor is also the academic advisor.
- The thesis option requires 6 credit hours of required core courses, minimum 6 credit hours of approved pair of Computer Science courses from a single research area, 12 credit hours of electives (exclusive of independent study and directed research), and a minimum of 6 credit hours of thesis research (XXX 6971).
- The non-thesis option requires 6 credit hours of required core courses, minimum 6 credit hours of approved pair of Computer Science courses from a single research area, and 18 credit hours of electives, with a possibility of 6 credit hours of independent study or directed research (e.g., XXX 6908 or XXX 6918) if so desired by the student. Students must also complete a culminating experience in the form of a portfolio as specified by the program's graduate committee.

Curriculum

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

Timeline for Completion

Students must follow a prescribed, yet flexible path, achieving milestones along the way. Although there is no guarantee that each student will be able to complete all the requirements, if a student is hard working and diligent, and is a full-time graduate student, he or she should be able to complete a master's program within 1 to 2 years. For non-thesis master's students who are working full-time and going to school part-time, it may take 3 to 5 years to earn the degree.

Advising/Mentoring

Advising and mentoring are two very important elements in a graduate student's career. Upon acceptance into the CS program, graduate students are assigned an **academic adviser**. This person advises the student on course selections during the early stages of the student's graduate career. For thesis option MS students, the academic adviser needs to be rapidly replaced by a **research adviser** who serves as course adviser and research mentor. The research adviser may or may not be the person initially assigned as academic adviser, depending primarily on the research path the student chooses.

The student/research adviser relationship is not irrevocable for either the student or the faculty member. The most common reason for change is incompatibility of research agendas between the adviser and the student. For this reason, students should not only talk to potential advisers, but also to students already in the adviser's research group to learn first-hand the dynamics of the group and the expectations of students in the group. While changes are natural and acceptable, we highly discourage students to jump from one adviser to another, especially when there is financial support involved. Moreover, when a student starts a research project with an adviser, that student has a professional obligation to complete the agreed-upon research tasks to the best of his or her capabilities, leaving everything in a state that makes it easy for another student to continue the work. Additionally, the student has a moral obligation to not use the unpublished research results of one adviser's group when

moving to another group, unless that is agreed upon by the first adviser. Of course, this does not preclude use of published results or of general knowledge gained in the research area and its accepted practices, results and tools.

Roles and Responsibilities

Faculty Adviser

- The adviser helps the student select which courses to take.
- The adviser (in consultation with the student) develops the student's plan of study.
- The adviser directs the student's research.
- For MS thesis option, the adviser reviews and approves the student's thesis.
- The adviser often provides financial support for the student (based on a research grant).

Student

- The student takes coursework as required, maintaining a minimum 3.0 GPA.
- The student maintains a full course load and works diligently to complete all requirements in a timely manner.
- The student (in consultation with the faculty adviser) develops a plan of study prior to completing the first 9 hours of coursework.
- The student identifies (in consultation with the faculty adviser) a suitable research topic.
- The student works in the lab or field or other venue as needed to complete his or her research.
- The student is responsible for knowing and meeting all university deadlines, rules, and regulations – see the section titled [Student Responsibilities](#) in the Graduate Catalog.
- If a student wants to change faculty advisers, the student should discuss the situation with his or her current faculty adviser first, and then request the change through the graduate coordinator. The change must be approved by the current faculty adviser, the new faculty adviser, and the graduate coordinator.

Plan of Study (POS)

The Plan of Study (POS), sometimes referred to as the Plan of Study, is an agreement between the student and the program, listing requirements for completing the degree. All CS graduate students must have an approved Plan of Study (POS) developed by the student and his/her adviser that lists the specific courses to be taken as part of the degree. The student must maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0 in his or her POS, as well as in all coursework taken since entering the program.

No coursework can appear on a POS that is more than 7 years old at the time of graduation.

The POS must be filed prior to the completion of 9 credit hours after admission to the program. This is mandatory. The College of Graduate Studies automatically places a "hold" on future registration for noncompliance. The POS can, and usually will, be revised later to reflect changes in the courses actually taken, but it is crucial that a POS be on file, signed by the student and the faculty adviser, and approved by the Graduate Program Coordinator. Any variation from the current POS must be approved by research adviser and Graduate Program Coordinator and then immediately reflected in an updated POS.

The POS for students is flexible and unique to each student. However, it must meet university, college, and department rules for minimum number of hours, etc. (see Program Requirements, above).

A student should periodically review his/her GPS report (Degree Audit) to track the 'official' progress towards his/her degree. Visit my.ucf.edu, and from your home page choose the Graduate Plan of Study under the "Degree Audit" section on the lower right hand corner of the page.

Transfer of Credit

MS students, with the approval of their adviser and the graduate coordinator, can transfer up to 9 credit hours, of B grade (3.0) or better, in graduate coursework (no Independent Study/Thesis credit) from another program at UCF or from an regionally accredited institution. This must appear on the initial POS submitted by the student within their first 9 credit hours in the CS graduate program.

In no case can courses with a grade below a B (3.0) be transferred, nor can undergraduate credit.

Timeline

A typical MS degree program (non-thesis):

1st Year of Graduate Training

Fall

- CDA 5106: Advanced Computer Architecture (3)
- COT 5405: Design and Analysis of Algorithms (3)
- CAP 5636: Advanced Artificial Intelligence (3)

Semester Total: 9 credit hours

Spring

- CAP 5610: Machine Learning (3)
- CAP 6640: Computer Understanding Natural Language (3)
- COP 5021: Program Analysis (3)

Semester Total: 9 credit hours

2nd Year of Graduate Training

Fall

- COP 6621: Compiler Construction (3)
- CAP 6938: Independent Study

Semester Total: 6 credit hours

Spring

- CAP 6671: Intelligent Systems
- CAP 6938: Independent Study

Semester Total: 6 credit hours

Thesis Requirements

The thesis is the culminating or comprehensive experience for those who conduct an original research study as part of a thesis-option program. An oral defense of the thesis is required. The approved thesis must be written and prepared in accordance with program, college, and university requirements. The College of Engineering and Computer Science requires that all thesis defense announcements are approved by the student's adviser and posted on the college's [website](#) and on the university-wide [Events Calendar](#) at the College of Graduate Studies website at least two weeks before the defense date. A final electronic copy of the thesis must be submitted to the UCF College of Graduate Studies by the dates shown in the [Academic Calendar](#).

University Dissertation Requirements

A thesis is optional for this program; the following information is intended for those choosing to complete a thesis.

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 Enrollment

Six credits of thesis are required and up to 3 credit hours of independent study (XXX 6908) are allowed with the professor who directs the student's thesis. However no more than 6 credit hours of independent study (XXX 6908) and/or other non-thesis research courses are allowed to count in the plan of study. The thesis experience is expected to span two semesters. Thesis students who are full-time must continue to enroll in 3 credit hours of thesis course work until the thesis requirement is satisfied, even if it goes beyond the minimum of 6 credit hours of thesis.

Thesis Advisory Committee Membership

A student writing a thesis must have a Thesis Advisory Committee consisting of at least three members who are approved members of the Graduate Faculty or Graduate Faculty Scholars (<https://www.ucf.edu/catalog/?catoid=4&navoid=201>). To learn more about committee membership eligibility and responsibilities, please contact your program advisor or visit the [Graduate Catalog](#).

Graduate Research

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 (3) disseminate the intellectual property to the general public. Students are responsible for being informed of rules, regulations and policies pertaining to research. Below are some general policies and resources.

Research Policies and Ethics Information: UCF's Office of Research and Commercialization ensures the UCF community complies with local, state and federal regulations that relate to research. For polices 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 their website: research.ucf.edu/ > Compliance.

UCF's Patent and Invention Policy: In most cases, 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. Please see the current UCF Graduate Catalog for details: <https://www.ucf.edu/catalog/?catoid=4&navoid=201> > Policies > General Graduate Policies.

Department Research

Research interests of the computer science faculty include bioinformatics, computational biology, computer and network security, computer architecture, computer forensics, computer graphics, computer networks, image and video processing/analysis, computer vision, cryptography, data compression, database management systems, data mining, data analytics, design and analysis of algorithms, evolutionary computation, genetic algorithms, graph theory, hardware/software co-design, machine learning, mixed and virtual reality, mobile computing, modeling and simulation, multimedia systems, artificial intelligence, natural language processing, neural networks, parallel and distributed processing, performance evaluation, programming languages, quantum computing, semantic web, software agents, robotics, software engineering, and VLSI systems. Visit the "Research" and the "Industry" sections, as well as individual faculty member's web sites under "People" in the [Computer Science Division's](#) website for additional information.

Financial Support

Financial support is a major concern for graduate students, especially since many rely on financial support from the university to pursue graduate study. In combination, the college, the university, and the department provide financial assistance to graduate students in several ways:

- **Fellowships and Scholarships** - Available to academically outstanding students.
- **Graduate Teaching Assistantships** – GTAs are available for grading, recitation instruction, or laboratory teaching.
- **Graduate Research Assistantships** – GRAs (for participating in sponsored faculty directed research) are available depending on the current funding levels of the faculty.

Graduate students may also receive financial assistance through loans. For more information, see [UCF Financial Information](#), which describes the types of financial assistance available at UCF and provides general guidance in planning your graduate finances. The [Financial Information](#) section of the Graduate Catalog is another key resource.

Funding Requirements

- All students must maintain a 3.0 GPA in their Plan of Study, as well as overall courses taken since entering the program. They must not receive more than two grades below B (3.0), and those must be balanced to maintain the 3.0 overall. Students on assistantship agreements are expected to work 10 to 20 hours per week on their assigned tasks (whether it be grading, teaching, or research), while they are maintaining satisfactory progress in completing their academic courses. Note that satisfactory progress for a supported student is not the same as maintaining the minimum grades, or just barely performing at research. Financial support is a privilege not a right.
- Students must meet their obligations and maintain satisfactory work as defined by their supervisor to continue to receive financial support. Also, students must register for the proper number of credit hours in a timely manner to allow the processing of tuition waivers.

- The duration of financial support may vary from one semester to another.
- Mandatory training requirements must be met for a student to be hired in the position of Graduate Teaching Associate, Assistant or Grader. 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. See graduate.ucf.edu/graduate-teaching/ for training requirements and registration instructions.
- Students who are non-native speakers of English and do not have a degree from a U.S. institution must pass the Versant test before they will be permitted to teach as Graduate Teaching Associates (position code 9183) or Graduate Teaching Assistants (position code 9184). The Versant test is not required for students who will be appointed as a Graduate Teaching Grader (position code 9187). Additional information including how to register for the test can be accessed through the [GTA Information](#) section of the College of Graduate Studies student website.
- International students are expected to be here as full-time students, and may not work off campus except under certain strict conditions. For information about the types of employment available to international students and the requirements and restrictions based on visa type, see the International Services Center's website: global.ucf.edu/ > Students > Employment.

Graduate Student Associations

EECS Student Organizations

The oldest and largest educational and scientific computing society is the [Association of Computing Machinery \(ACM\)](#) which offers student memberships for \$19 per year. The local chapter is at [UCF ACM Chapter](#). Female students in our school have formed [Women in EECS/WIE](#) and host many activities important to women in a scientific and technical area, including an active mentoring program. Membership is free.

Other EECS Student Organizations:

- [UPE Honor Society](#) for Computer Science and Information Technology students
- [IEEE UCF Student Branch](#)

The Graduate Student Association (GSA)

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 your program adviser.

Professional Development

A graduate student's professional development goes beyond completing course work, passing exams, conducting research for a thesis or dissertation, and meeting degree requirements. Professional development also involves developing the academic and nonacademic skills needed to become successful in the field of choice.

- UCF has an active professional development program for graduate students, including the Professoriate Program, sponsored by Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning (FCTL), the GTA Certificate Program, sponsored by FCTL, the Pathways to Success Workshops, the Graduate Research forum, sponsored by the College of Graduate Studies, and special award recognitions such as the Award for Excellence by a Graduate Teaching Assistant, the Award for Excellence in Graduate Student Teaching, the Award for the Outstanding Master's Thesis, and the Award for the Innovative Thesis or Dissertation (see below for additional information).

- The university has active student chapters of the Association of Computing Machinery and the IEEE. The cost for student membership in the national organizations is subsidized by professional memberships. This is a “bargain” that no student should pass up.
- Computer Science sponsors regular colloquia talks by leading researchers in the discipline. All students are strongly encouraged to attend as many as feasible within the constraints of their courses and other academic obligations.
- Various research groups hold their own seminars in which students present their research in front of other members of their research group.
- Students are expected to publish the results of their research.
- Graduate students in CS are encouraged to present papers at conferences. Often their faculty mentor will be able to fund one or more such opportunities. The School of EECS, the College of Graduate Studies and the Student Government Association are other sources of such support. To review the College of Graduate Studies award requirements and apply online, see <https://www.ucf.edu/catalog/?catoid=4&navoid=201> > Graduate Travel Awards.
- Graduate students in CS are also encouraged to participate in summer research internships when this is compatible with their research agendas – see your research adviser for more information and guidelines.

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.

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 Research Forum

The Research Forum will feature poster displays representing UCF's diverse colleges and disciplines.

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 presentation in each category will be given and all participants will receive recognition.

The College of Graduate Studies and the Graduate Student Association invite all UCF students, community, and employers to attend the Graduate Research Forum. For more information, contact researchweek@ucf.edu.

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/ > Writing for Graduate School.

Job Search

The Computer Science department maintains a [website link](#) designed to help students who have graduated from the Department of EECS to find jobs and help employers recruit students. Please visit the site to view current listings. If you have any questions, please contact industry@eecs.ucf.edu.

For additional employment resources, please see [EECS Job Resource Center](#).

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/.

For specific services or resources provided by the academic program, please contact the graduate program director or academic adviser.

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

- [Computer Science MS](#)
- [College of Engineering and Computer Science](#)
- [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

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Laviola II, Joseph *

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Shah, Mubarak *

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Disciplinary affiliations: Computer Science
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Research interests: Complex Systems, Biomorphic Computing, Human-agent Interaction
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Stanley, Kenneth *

College: College of Engineering and Computer Science
Disciplinary affiliations: Computer Science

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