



UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

# Forensic Science MS Graduate Program Handbook

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The information in this handbook supplements but **does not replace** information in the UCF Graduate Catalog.

# Forensic Science MS Program

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](#)

## 1 Introduction

The Forensic Science MS program is to service the needs of both practicing professionals and full-time students who desire an advanced program of study in forensic science. This program is also designed 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 three concentrations: Forensic Analysis, Forensic Biochemistry and Forensic Professional. The Forensic Analysis and Forensic Biochemistry concentrations require the student to perform original research and defend a written thesis. The Forensic Professional concentration is a non-thesis option comprised of course work and an independent study capstone project.

The direction of each concentration is dictated by the continually increasing complexity of Forensic Science as a discipline, such as new challenges of terrorism and increasing evidentiary standards. The **Forensic Analysis Concentration** 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 Concentration** 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. These specialized concentrations are not designed for international applicants. The **Forensic Professional Concentration** is comprised of 34 credit hours of study beyond the bachelor of science degree but does not require an original laboratory-based research project. This concentration culminates in a one-credit-hour independent study capstone project performed under the direction of one of the faculty members in the program.

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. The Forensic Science MS may be completed fully online, although not all elective options or program prerequisites may be offered online. Newly admitted students choosing to complete this program exclusively via UCF online classes may enroll with a reduction in campus-based fee.

## 2 Professional Behavior Expectations for Graduate Students

Students must abide by the UCF Golden Rule and any other student codes of conduct at the College and Department levels.

Students must behave consistently with the UCF's Creed for Integrity, Scholarship, Community, Creativity and Excellence.

Students must uphold the culture of collegiality and collaboration in your classes, research groups, and laboratories.

Students must uphold the philosophy of partnership as part of this community which respects and celebrates diversity.

Students must contribute to the discourse of scholarly discipline through presentations, publications, collaborative projects, and any other means.

Students must contribute to the mission of UCF by providing high-quality teaching to undergraduate students, supporting the scholarly activities and fellow graduate students whenever possible, and upholding the public-service aspects of the university mission.

Students must be able to take responsibility for their behavior in all professional settings, including being responsible in meeting deadlines, arriving to research or classes on time, and being open to feedback from their research advisors, instructors, and supervisors. Students must also be open to examining personal attitudes, perceptions, and stereotypes and willing to modify behavior in response to constructive criticism.

Students must be able to ask effective questions, to receive answers perceptively, to record information accurately, and interpret data accordingly with appropriate justification. They must be able to effectively communicate their findings with their research advisor and colleagues, via verbal and non-verbal communication.

## 3 Curriculum

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

## 4 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.

### 4.1 Milestones for Master's Degree Completion

- Thesis Option Program
  - 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)
- Non-Thesis Option Program
  - Selection of a Capstone Advisor (first semester)
  - Core Coursework and Electives (two years to complete)
  - Complete capstone course in the last, graduating semester

### 4.2 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. International applicants should apply for the Forensic Professional Concentration.

### 4.3 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** and those who are working in a forensic laboratory typically take fewer hours per semester and therefore take longer to complete the course work.

### 4.4 Financial Support:

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

**Distance learners** or students working full time in a forensic laboratory will not be compensated for research activities and teaching services will not be required/requested.

### 4.5 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.

### 4.6 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.

The Thesis and Dissertation Manual provides guidelines for preparing, formatting and submitting your dissertation. (<https://graduate.ucf.edu/thesis-and-dissertation/>). For more information, please see Section 4.

### 4.7 Capstone Experience (generally completed the last semester)

#### Capstone

The capstone experience in the Forensic Professional Concentration requires one credit hour of Independent Study, which culminates in the submission of a required report on a pre-approved topic. This study will comprise either (1) a review of the current literature on a particular forensic science research topic area, or (2) a holistic case study dealing with a particular criminal case in which forensic evidence played a significant role. Along with your capstone advisor, you will agree on a capstone paper that will be evaluated by your advisor.

### 4.8 Graduation Information

The student must file an Intent to Graduate form through my.ucf.edu, prior to the University's Intent to Graduate Deadline. This deadline can be found on the UCF academic calendar.

The student should be aware of the various deadlines associated with completing the thesis or capstone experience. The final, electronic copy of the thesis should be filed with the University Thesis Editor. The student should familiarize themselves with the Thesis/Dissertation Manual that is available online (refer to Section 4).

Students who submit an Intent to Graduate, but are missing degree requirements (with no indication of completion in process) will be either approved for graduation pending status or denied. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the requirements of their degree have been met; therefore, students are encouraged to review their Graduate Plan of Study regularly. The Graduate Plan of Study can be found online at [my.ucf.edu](http://my.ucf.edu) > Student Self Service > My Academics > View My Advisement Report > Forensic Science MS. Additional information on the Intent to Graduate Process is presented in Section 8.3.

## 4.9 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.

## 4.9.1 Example Schedule of Courses

Example course schedules are provided below for the Forensic Analysis Concentration, Forensic Biochemistry Concentration and the Forensic Professional Concentration. Since many of the courses are offered every other year, the examples listed below detail courses that are available assuming the student begins the program in the fall semester of an odd calendar year (e.g. 2019, 2021, 2023, etc.). The courses presented here is not an exhausted list of courses that are available in each semester, but merely an example of the courses that are available that semester. Additionally, the courses that the student takes for their degree program should be agreed upon between the student and their research advisor or capstone advisor to ensure that the courses the student take support their thesis or capstone project.

The following schedule of courses for the Forensic Analysis Concentration and Forensic Biochemistry Concentration assumes full-time enrollment by students in residence at UCF. An example schedule of courses is provided for students in the Forensic Professional Concentration; however, these courses will depend on the student's course load.

### 4.9.1.1 Forensic Analysis Concentration

#### **1<sup>st</sup> Year of Graduate Training (assuming an Odd Start Year)**

<b>Fall (Odd)</b>	<b>Spring (Even)</b>	<b>Summer (Even)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• CHS 5504: Topics of Forensic Science (3)</li><li>• CHS 6513: Quality Assurance for Forensic Science (3)</li><li>• STA 5206: Statistical Analysis (3)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• CHS 5596: The Forensic Expert in the Courtroom (3)</li><li>• CHS 5937: Chemometric Applications in Forensic Science (3)</li><li>• CHS 6546: Forensic Analysis of Ignitable Liquids (3)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• CHS 6971: Thesis (3)</li><li>• CHM 6918: Directed Research (3)</li></ul>
Semester Total: 9 credit hours	Semester Total: 9 credit hours	Semester Total: 6

#### **2<sup>nd</sup> Year of Graduate Training**

<b>Fall (Even)</b>	<b>Spring (Odd)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• CHS 6971: Thesis (3)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• CHS 6509: Advanced Microscopy (3)</li><li>• CHM 6545: Forensic Analysis of Explosives (3)</li><li>• CHS 6971: Thesis (2)</li></ul>
Semester Total: 6 credit hours	Semester Total: 8 credit hours

### 4.9.1.2 Forensic Biochemistry Concentration

#### 1<sup>st</sup> Year of Graduate Training (assuming an Odd Start Year)

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##### Fall (Odd)

- CHS 5504: Topics of Forensic Science (3)
- CHS 6513: Quality Assurance for Forensic Science (3)
- CHS 6535: Forensic Molecular Biology (3)

Semester Total: 9 credit hours

##### Spring (Even)

- CHS 5596: The Forensic Expert in the Courtroom (3)
- CHS 6535L: Forensic Analysis of Biological Material (3)
- BCH 6740: Advanced Biochemistry (3)

Semester Total: 9 credit hours

##### Summer (Even)

- CHS 6971: Thesis (2)
- CHM 6918: Directed Research (4)

Semester Total: 6 credit hours

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Year of Graduate Training

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##### Fall (Even)

- CHS 6536: Population Genetics and Genetic Data Analysis (3)
- STA 5206: Statistical Analysis (3)
- CHS 6971: Thesis (3)

Semester Total: 9 credit hours

##### Spring (Odd)

- CHS 6971 Thesis (3)

Semester Total: 3 credit hours

### 4.9.1.3 Forensic Professional Concentration

#### 1<sup>st</sup> Year of Graduate Training (assuming an Odd Start Year)

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##### Fall (Odd)

- CHS 5504: Topics of Forensic Science (3)
- CHS 6513: Quality Assurance for Forensic Science (3)
- CHS 6535: Forensic Molecular Biology (3)

Semester Total: 9 credit hours

##### Spring (Even)

- CHS 5596: The Forensic Expert in the Courtroom (3)
- CHS 6546: Forensic Analysis of Ignitable Liquids (3)
- CHS 6535L: Forensic Analysis of Biological Materials (3)

Semester Total: 9 credit hours

##### Summer (Even)

- CHS 5518: Forensic Collection and Examination of Digital Evidence (3)

Semester Total: 3 credit hours

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Year of Graduate Training

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##### Fall (Even)

- CGS 5131: Computer Forensics 1 (3)
- CHS 6536: Populations Statistics and Genetics Data Analysis (3)

Semester Total: 6 credit hours

##### Spring (Odd)

- CHS 6509: Advanced Forensic Microscopy (3)
- CIS 6207: Practice of Digital Forensics (3)
- CHS 6908: Capstone Independent Study (1)

Semester Total: 7 credit hours

## 5 Thesis Requirements

### 5.1 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](mailto:editor@ucf.edu).

### 5.2 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/](http://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.

## 5.3 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](http://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](http://ucf.catalog.acalog.com/index.php?catoid=4) > General Policies > Full-time Enrollment Requirements.

## 6 Capstone Requirements

The student will work with their capstone advisor to select an appropriate topic for their capstone paper. The advisor will also advise the student on the formatting of the paper. The capstone report should be completed in and submitted the last semester the student in the Forensic Science MS Program.

## 7 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/](https://sciences.ucf.edu/chemistry/research/) to learn about the department's current forensic research.

### 7.1 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/](https://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/](https://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/](https://goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu/)). Additional information is given below under the "Ethics in Research" topic.

### 7.2 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.

### 7.3 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.

## 7.4 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/](http://research.ucf.edu/) > Research Integrity & Compliance > Institutional Review Board (IRB) > Investigators.

## 7.5 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/](http://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.

## 7.6 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](http://facultygovernance.arizona.edu/resource/code-research-ethics).

## 7.7 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](#).

## 8 Financial Support

Graduate students may receive financial assistance through fellowships, assistantships, tuition support, or loans. 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 more information on the types of financial assistance available for graduate students, please visit the College of Graduate Studies website <https://graduate.ucf.edu/ucf-funding/>. 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.

### 8.1 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, in good standing, be enrolled full-time and meets the requirements of the department policy.

For more information concerning graduate assistantships, see the Financial Information > Graduate Assistantships section of the current Graduate Catalog at <https://ucf.catalog.acalog.com/index.php> 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.

### 8.2 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 successfully 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).

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

### 8.3 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 course instructor. These assessments will be used to review strengths and weaknesses in the student's performance in preparation for future employment. GTA performance appraisal will follow the criteria approved by the department.

### 8.4 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 contact UCF Global at 407.823.2337 or visit their website at <https://global.ucf.edu/>.

## 8.5 Other Key Points

- If you are interested in financial assistance, you are strongly encouraged to apply for admission early. A complete application for admission, including all supporting documents, must be received by the priority date listed for your program under "Admissions."
- You must be admitted to a graduate program before the university can consider awarding financial assistance to you.
- UCF Graduate Studies awards university graduate fellowships, with most decisions based on nominations from the colleges and programs. All admitted graduate students are automatically considered in this nomination process. To be eligible for a fellowship, students must be accepted as a graduate student in a degree program and be enrolled full-time. University graduate fellowships are not affected by [FAFSA](#) determination of need.
- Please note that all fellowships do require students to fill out a fellowship application (either a university fellowship application, an external fellowship application, or a college or school fellowship application). For university fellowship applications, see College of Graduate Studies webpage on [UCF Funding](#).
- For information on assistantships (including teaching, research, and general graduate assistantships) or tuition support, contact the graduate program director of your major.

## 9 General Policies

### 9.1 Students Rights and Responsibilities

The Golden Rule is provided to answer any questions a student may have about the university rules and regulations, as well as outlines a student's right and responsibilities. The Golden Rule can be found online at <https://goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu>. Additionally, graduate students can find additional information about their responsibilities in the Graduate Catalog, found online at <http://www.graduate.ucf.edu/CurrentGradCatalog/> in the section marked policies > General Policies.

Additionally, information about college and university graduate policies:

Forensic Science MS Program Website: <https://sciences.ucf.edu/chemistry/graduate-forensic-science/>

COS Graduate Website: <https://sciences.ucf.edu/graduate/>

UCF Graduate Studies Website: <https://graduate.ucf.edu/>

### 9.2 Satisfactory Academic Performance

Satisfactory performance involves maintaining the standards of academic progress and professional integrity expected in a particular discipline or program and the department policy. Failure to maintain these standards may result in termination of the student from the program.

Students are required to maintain a 3.00 GPA in all coursework included in the program of study. Be aware that a B- (2.75) **does** negatively impact a GPA. While students are allowed to have six hours C (2.00) grades or lower (including U and I) in their program of study, this is the limit. Grades of C- and lower will count against a graduate GPA but cannot be used toward completion of a degree requirement.

A program GPA below 3.00 at the end of any semester will result in a student being placed on "academic provisional" status. In this status, a student is not eligible for tuition waiver support or employment in a graduate position. The

student is given the next nine hours of their program coursework to improve their GPA to 3.00 or better. Further, exceeding 6 hours of C or lower grades or a program GPA of 2.00 or lower will result in removal from the program.

4000-Level coursework is acceptable in a graduate program of study if taken while a graduate student, but is limited to 6 hours and the grade has to be that of a B- or higher. If a grade of below B- is made in an approved 4000-level course, it is not counted toward completion of the program requirement, but it is calculated in the graduate GPA.

## 9.3 Satisfactory Academic Progress

Master students can be enrolled either as a full time student or a part time student. However, students on a part-time status are not eligible for graduate assistantships. Students considered full-time students take 9 credits in the fall/spring semesters and 6 credits in the summer. Part-time students take less than those credit hours per semester. A student may be held to other enrollment requirements, as defined by financial awards, veteran status, employment, or other outside agencies.

Students in their last semester who need less than 9 credit hours to complete their program, unless they are receiving federal loans, may not be required to maintain a full course load to be considered a full-time student. However, these students are considered full time for fellowship, employment, and tuition waiver purposes if they enroll into the hours required for program completion and have filed an Intent to Graduate.

To complete the degree, courses older than seven years cannot be applied toward a graduate program of study. In order to allow courses older than seven to be applied toward the program of study, the student must file a petition.

### **Graduate Student Intent to Graduate Form**

Intent to Graduate must be filed by the end of the registration add/drop in the semester that the student is intending to graduate. The Graduate Advisor/Coordinator confirms potential completion of degree by confirming program/plan, checking audit (making any revisions) and signing the form. The audit (with needed corrections, if any) and form are forwarded to the College of Sciences Director of Graduate Services who verifies potential completion.

Note: If the program of study does not show that all requirements may be met by the end of the intended term, the form will either be approved pending or not processed.

Approved forms are forwarded to the Divisions of Graduate Studies for processing and notification is sent to the Registrar's office that the student is intending to graduate. If it is determined that they students will not graduate, the COS Director of Graduate Services should be notified. The student will need to re-file their intent for the next semester they intend to complete the degree. Final certification is completed after grades have been released for the semester, and final transcripts are normally available about three to four weeks after certification.

## 9.4 Transfer Coursework

All transfer coursework must be approved by the program's graduate coordinator. A maximum of 9 credit hours may be transferred from a recognized M.S. degree program in chemistry, biochemistry, forensic science, or a closely related field. Transfer credits, for elective courses, and the program of study will be determined on an individual basis.

## 9.5 Incomplete Grades:

Students who received an incomplete grade (I) in a course are encouraged to resolve this incomplete as soon as possible. However, it must be resolved within one calendar year or prior to graduation certification, whichever comes first. Incompletes left unresolved will be changed to F (or a U in thesis hours) if not resolved in the allowed time period. Incomplete grades cannot be used towards completion of the program of study.

Incomplete grades are not counted as satisfactorily completed courses and are not recognized as such by Graduate Studies for fellowship purposes nor by Financial Aid. Students on financial Assistance must check with the Financial Aid office to see if the receipt of an incomplete grade will affect their financial award.

## 9.6 Student in Good Standing Requirement

A Graduate Study must remain in Good Standing during their M.S. program. A student given an unsatisfactory status must address the deficiencies within one semester or will be evaluated by the program for immediate termination.

## 9.7 Choosing a Research Group

The week before the semester begins, the program orientation will be held for all new and incoming students. During this meeting, students will speak to all of the graduate advisors and learn about their research areas. After this meeting, the student will send a ranked list to the Graduate Program Coordinator on which advisors they wish to work with. The Graduate Program Coordinator will speak to the potential advisor to see if there are willing to take the new student. Afterwards, the student will be notified if they have been connected with a research advisor.

Students can also reach out and identify an advisor before the orientation process. The student can speak directly with the advisor. The student will still following the request process written above.

## 9.8 Withdrawl Policy

If a student decides to withdraw from a course, they must do so by the semester's withdrawal deadline. In doing so, the student is still liable for tuition and fees for the course. The semester's withdrawal deadline can be found on UCF's Academic Calendar.

## 9.9 Petitions and Grievances

It is the student's responsibility to be informed of graduate policies and procedures; however, should a student wish to request an exception to a university or program policy, they must file a petition that outlines the nature of their request. Normally, petitions are presented to the graduate program's coordinator and/or committee, the college's Director of Graduate Services and the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies, and the Graduate Council for consideration.

Should a student wish to file a grievance, they should first review UCF's Golden Rule (<http://www.goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu/>) and the Academic Grievance Procedures in the Graduate Catalog (<http://www.graduate.ucf.edu/currentGradCatalog/> > Policies > General Graduate Policies > Academic Grievance Procedure).

### **Graduate Petition Form**

Requests for exceptions to college or university policies are made by petition. The petition process includes both student and program required documentation prior to its receipt in the College of Sciences Graduate Office:

- In addition to the Graduate Petition Form, the student must supply their program with a clear statement of what exactly is being requested, why it is being petitioned and rationale for support.
- If approved, the program supplies an additional letter of support and forwards the request to the College of Sciences Director of Graduate Services who reviews and submits to the COS Associate Dean for Graduate Studies
- If approved, the college supplies an additional letter of support and forwards the request to the UCF Graduate Council Subcommittee for Policy and Appeals.

If at any point the petition is denied, the student is given the option of having the petition considered at the next level; however, the Graduate Council provides the final decision regarding petitions. Denials at any level are accompanied with a written explanation.

## 10 Graduate Student Associations

The Uknighthed Chemistry Graduate Association (UCGA) is the Department of Chemistry's graduate organization which is committed to developing a cohesive department for graduate students to promote collaboration within the department and engaging the general public in STEM field, particularly chemistry. To learn more or to get involved, please visit [uknighthedchemistry.weebly.com/about.html](http://uknighthedchemistry.weebly.com/about.html).

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

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

## 11 Professional Development

### 11.1 Travel Support for Conference Presentation

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. [www.graduate.ucf.edu](http://www.graduate.ucf.edu) > Funding > Presentation Fellowship.

Graduate Student Travel Funding is available to pay transportation expenses for graduate students who are delivering a research paper or comparable creative activity at a professional meeting. Contact the Student Government Association at 407.823.5648 or visit their [website](#) for more information.

Travel funds for presentation of research results at conferences may also be provided by the research advisor, depending on availability of funds and at his/her discretion.

### 11.2 Instructor Training and Development

The University of Central Florida promotes excellence in all levels of teaching and as such they offer several programs for the professional development of Graduate Teaching Assistants at UCF.

- **GTA Training** (mandatory for employment as a GTA)  
The College of Graduate Studies and the University accrediting body require training before graduate students are permitted to work as Associates (instructors of record), Assistants or Graders. All three levels of employment require online training, and Associates are further required to attend a single-day training session face to face (held just prior to the start of the first day of class in every semester). Click [here](#) to read more information about training for all levels and how to self-register for these training programs. You must separately register for these programs at the [Graduate Studies website](#). Questions should be addressed to [gradassistantship@ucf.edu](mailto:gradassistantship@ucf.edu).
- **Preparing Tomorrow's Faculty Program**  
Every semester the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning offers a voluntary program (12-weeks) on teaching at the college level, open to all UCF Graduate Students. Students complete a series of online modules, assemble a first draft of their teaching portfolio, and engage in a learning community

facilitated by Faculty Center staff and experienced UCF professors. Textbooks and materials are provided. For more information: [ctl.ucf.edu/](http://ctl.ucf.edu/) > Programs > GTA Programs, click [here](#) or call 407/823-3544.

- **Department of Chemistry, GTA Training**

The Chemistry Department promotes an atmosphere that encourages students to be successful in all aspects of being a chemist or a forensic scientist, including teaching. Therefore, in addition to the required GTA training by the College of Graduate Studies, the Department of Chemistry will provide a two-semester long training for all Chemistry GTAs. This will provide a platform for students to discuss ways to teach and engage students in chemistry classes and laboratory settings.

## 11.3 UCF Writing Center

<http://uwc.cah.ucf.edu/>

The University Writing Center is a campus resource that offers free individual and small-group consultations to UCF community members, for any writing in any situation. Our purpose is not merely to fix papers but to teach writers strategies to understand and to navigate complex situations for writing, both in and outside the University.

## 11.4 Graduate Student Associations

There are a few associations that are dedicated to the assisting and supporting graduate students throughout their graduate career. Each association offers ample activity to develop the student's leadership skills outside of the research laboratory.

- Uknighed Chemistry Graduate Association (<http://uknighedchemistry.weebly.com/>)
- UCF Graduate Student Association ([facebook.com/groups/UCFgsa/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/UCFgsa/))
- Alliance for Diversity in Science & Engineering ([allianceinscience.org](http://allianceinscience.org))

## 11.5 Pathways to Success Workshops

Pathways to Success Workshop Series (<https://graduate.ucf.edu/pathways-to-success/>)

The *Pathway to Success* program, coordinated by the College of Graduate Studies, offers the following free development opportunities for graduate students and postdoctoral scholars 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/](https://graduate.ucf.edu/pathways-to-success/).

## 11.6 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 please visit their [website](#) or contact them via [researchweek@ucf.edu](mailto:researchweek@ucf.edu).

## 11.7 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. Each year, students can submit a portfolio for nomination of College and University level awards of excellence. These are intended to showcase student excellence in academic achievement, teaching, research, leadership and community service. 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/](http://graduate.ucf.edu/awards-and-recognition/).

## 11.8 Other Information

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

For grant-proposal writing resources: [uwc.cah.ucf.edu/](http://uwc.cah.ucf.edu/).

## 12 Job Search Services

### Career Services and Experiential Learning

[career.ucf.edu/](http://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.

## 13 College of Graduate Studies 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.

## 14 Useful Links

- [Forensic Science MS](#)
- [United Chemistry Graduate Association](#)
- [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](#)
- [My UCF](#)
- [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](#)

## 15 Graduate Faculty Members

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

### **Ballantyne, John \***

College: College of Sciences

Disciplinary affiliations: Forensic Science and Chemistry

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

Contact Info: [Jack.Ballantyne@ucf.edu](mailto:Jack.Ballantyne@ucf.edu)

Websites: <https://ncfs.ucf.edu/people/ballantyne-jack/>

### **Baudelet, Matthieu \***

College: College of Sciences

Disciplinary affiliations: Forensic Science and Chemistry

Research Interests: Microscopy, LIBS, LA-ICP-MS, Instrumentation Development, Glass, Anthropology, Powders

Contact Info: [Baudelet@ucf.edu](mailto:Baudelet@ucf.edu)

Websites: <https://ncfs.ucf.edu/people/baudelet-matthieu/>

### **Bridge, Candice \***

College: College of Sciences

Disciplinary affiliations: Forensic Science and Chemistry

Research Interests: Analytical Chemistry, Mass Spectrometry Techniques, Spectroscopy, Forensic Lubricants, Gunshot Residue, Trace Evidence, Chemometric Analysis

Contact Info: [cbridge@ucf.edu](mailto:cbridge@ucf.edu)

Websites: <https://ncfs.ucf.edu/people/bridge-candice/>

### **Campiglia, Andres \***

College: College of Sciences

Disciplinary affiliations: Chemistry and Forensic Science

Research Interests: Analytical Chemistry, Chemical Sensing, Environmental Chemistry, Liquid Chromatography, Capillary Electrophoresis, and Biological, Forensic and Pharmaceutical Analysis.

Contact Info: [Andres.campiglia@ucf.edu](mailto:Andres.campiglia@ucf.edu)

Websites: <https://ncfs.ucf.edu/people/campiglia-andres/>

### **Kolpashchikov, Dmitry \***

College: College of Sciences

Disciplinary affiliations: Chemistry and Forensic Science

Research Interests: Multicomponent Sensors for Nucleic Acid analysis, Binary reagents for DNA polymerase Inactivation, DNA Logic Circuits.

Contact Info: [Dmitry.Kolpashchikov@ucf.edu](mailto:Dmitry.Kolpashchikov@ucf.edu)

Websites: <https://ncfs.ucf.edu/people/kolpashikov-dmitry/>

### **Sigman, Michael \***

College: College of Sciences

Disciplinary affiliations: Forensic Science and Chemistry

Research Interests: Pattern Recognition, Fire Debris Analysis, Explosives, Smokeless Powder, Gunshot Residue, Gas Chromatography-Mass Spectrometry,

Contact Info: [michael.sigman@ucf.edu](mailto:michael.sigman@ucf.edu)

Website: <https://ncfs.ucf.edu/people/sigman-michael/>

## **Tang, Larry \***

College: College of Sciences

Disciplinary affiliations: Forensic Science and Statistics

Research Interests: Statistical Methodology Development in Forensic, Criminology, Diagnostic Medicine, Group Sequential Design and Substance Abuse Research.

Contact Info: [Liansheng.Tang@ucf.edu](mailto:Liansheng.Tang@ucf.edu)

Website: <https://ncfs.ucf.edu/people/tang-larry/>

## **16 Forensic Science MS Program Contact Info**

- **Candice Bridge, PhD**  
Associate Professor  
Partnership Building 1, Room 316D  
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Phone: 407.823.1263
- **Jack Ballantyne, PhD**  
Professor  
Partnership Building 1, Room 301  
[Jack.Ballantyne@ucf.edu](mailto:Jack.Ballantyne@ucf.edu)  
Phone: 407-823-0163
- **Michael Sigman, PhD**  
Professor  
Partnership Building 1, Room 225C  
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Phone: 407-823-6469