

# Memorandum

To : **Graduate Forensic Science Students**

Date: October 16, 2014

Subject: **Graduate Advisors and Research Advisors in the UC Davis Forensic Science Masters Program.**

Ref: 1. Office of Graduate Studies website:  
<http://gradstudies.ucdavis.edu/gradcouncil/Policy%20Service%20on%20Advanced%20Degree%20Committees%20approved%204-1-2011.pdf>  
2. Current Graduate Student Guide - <http://gradstudies.ucdavis.edu/students/handbook/>  
3. Current Forensic Science Graduate Program Brochure at <http://forensicscience.ucdavis.edu>  
(Links 1-3 updated 8-6-2011)

## **Background**

All students entering the program in fall quarter 2013 or after will be required to follow the revised program which is effective July 2, 2013. The Master of Science in Forensic Science (MSFS) program at UC Davis requires the completion of a minimum of 54 class/research units. There are specific policies/guidelines you will need to follow in planning your research and completing your thesis. UC Davis prides itself on its research reputation and to ensure the quality of this research, certain policies must be followed. This memorandum will discuss the role of your graduate advisor and your principal investigator (P.I.) or thesis advisor.

The selection of your thesis advisor and your research topic are the most important decisions you will make while you are enrolled in the Forensic Science program. Most of your time and effort within the program will be spent developing and researching your thesis topic. Your research will be conducted under the direct supervision of the Forensic Science Graduate Group, which reports to the UC Davis Office of Graduate Studies.

## **Forensic Program Graduate Advisors**

Upon acceptance in the program you will be assigned a Forensic Science graduate advisor from the Academic Senate members in the Forensic Science Graduate Group. The role of the graduate advisor is explained in reference 2, pages 10-11. Your graduate advisor will guide you in the selection of the appropriate courses (ref. 3) and when you are ready to begin your thesis research project, he/she will help you select the members of your thesis committee (ref. 1). The graduate advisor has signature authority and will sign both your Annual Progress Report and your Advancement to Candidacy form.

## **Developing Research Project**

Some suggestions for beginning a project are as follows:

- Speak with the Program Director, Christopher Hopkins, to determine your research interests. He can put you in contact with different professors for varying project ideas.
- If the project sponsor is a UC Davis professor, he/she will serve as your principal investigator or thesis advisor.
- Alternatively, if you have a specific area of interest, you can draft a proposal, and then find a UC thesis advisor who will sponsor it. However, you need to consider some of the following questions:
  - How are the costs of materials and consumable supplies going to be paid?
  - At what facility will the actual research be conducted?
  - What is the anticipated time frame for the research?

- The above issues may also apply to specialized research topics sponsored by your own organization/company. There may be legal issues such as “intellectual property” that need to be properly addressed.

The fact that the research topic might be a priority issue for your non-UC Davis advisor does not necessarily imply that this research is of suitable caliber for the MSFS program.

### **UC Davis Research Advisors Policy**

In order to maintain the quality of the UC Davis research effort, the University has developed policies for the selection of thesis committee advisors. The rules do allow for some flexibility, but they must be handled on a case by case basis. The policies are briefly summarized as follows (ref. 1):

- At least one member (normally two) of the committee must be a voting member of the UC Academic Senate which includes assistant professors, associate professors, and professors, lecturers with security of employment, professors of clinical “\_\_\_\_\_” and other senate members from the UC system. A member of the Academic Federation faculty can be the second UC voting person.
- Generally, all members of the advisory committee must have achieved a level of education equivalent to an MS degree or higher (ref. 1)
- Upon written request by the graduate advisor, and with approval by the dean of Graduate Studies, advisors may be selected from lecturers and staff engaged in continuing education and research.
- The chair of the committee has to be either a member of the Academic Senate or the Academic Federation.
- The selection of a committee member who has special expertise and qualifications, and is outside the University of California, requires a written request documenting the expertise and need by the forensic graduate advisor. This request must be approved by Graduate Studies. (ref. 1).
- Generally no more than one person from outside the UC system can be on the thesis committee (ref. 1 and 2). Furthermore, an outside adviser must sign a non-compensation agreement.
- There are always exceptions but they must be handled on a case by case basis, and require approval by the dean of Graduate Studies. (ref. 2)

### **Beginning the Selection of Advisors and Related Issues**

Once you have decided to begin your research in a focused area, you need to complete the Forensic Science research proposal (blank copy is on the MSFS student web site). Using this form, you and your graduate advisor will select the members of your committee.

- The P.I. must be an Academic Senate member or an Academic Federation member.
- The candidate must have three advisors on his or her research committee.
- The principle advisor may develop a schedule of periodic meetings with the candidate and other meetings with members of the thesis committee.
- The principal advisor should be a member of the graduate group. If that person is not, there are mechanisms to include them as part of the faculty group
- The advisors have the final decision as to the suitability of the research topic and if the research efforts meet UC Davis standards.

### **Advancement to Candidacy for the Master’s Degree**

Once you have completed at least half of the minimum units required for the Masters Degree, have an approved research program and a minimum of at least one quarter before you expect to graduate, you should apply for “Advancement to Candidacy for the Master’s Degree”. In actual practice, you will want to do this process as soon as your research is well established and you have a projected completion date within a year’s period. The details of these procedures are explained on the MSFS student web site: “Advancement to

Candidacy Procedures". You will need to come to the Forensic Science program office to sign various forms and review your account status.

### **Exemptions**

There are always unique situations that may not be addressed by current rules. These situations will be addressed on a case by case basis. The final decision for the resolution of these special cases rests with the chair of the Forensic Science Graduate Group and the dean of Graduate Studies.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Christopher J. Hopkins". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

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Christopher J. Hopkins, director, Forensic Science Graduate Program