

Graduate Council Guidance on 299/297 and Related Courses
Fall 2023

Most graduate students take from one to twelve units of 299/297 special study or research courses each quarter. These courses represent the academic activities related to the students' production of scholarly or creative outcomes. In contrast to undergraduates who are full-time students and also work part-time, there may be considerable overlap between graduate student "coursework" (or the academic outcomes that a graduate student achieves for 299 credit) and their part-time work. *Graduate Council affirms that the degree of this overlap remains at the discretion of the faculty member but emphasizes that academic coursework (299 units) and academic employment are distinct activities that faculty members should map out for their graduate students at the beginning of each quarter.*

According to UCR policy, one unit of credit is assigned for three hours per week of scholarly activity, and this includes 299 courses. In Graduate Council's view, setting the goals and expectations for 299 units can be challenging, and there are many equivalent approaches—consistent with policies on unit credits—that are appropriate and depend on graduate research expectations for the program and the student. Therefore, it is a best practice for all graduate faculty to map out the goals or expectations for 299 courses and, where applicable, academic employment responsibilities at the start of each quarter.

The need for clearly predefined goals and expectations is comparable to the reasons we have syllabi for other courses. Faculty should develop and convey to students the expectations for the academic progress needed for a satisfactory 299 grade. Given the diversity of graduate programs and disciplines, here is a compilation of examples of different approaches to 299 courses, developed by UC Davis' Graduate Council, in the following Box folder:

<https://ucdavis.box.com/s/8rtndm60coakr29bpwhgl45zwukcb9jj>. We also attach presentation slides developed by UCR's Graduate Division. While the use of these resources is not mandatory, we hope that they are helpful for those programs looking for opportunities to strengthen their mentoring efforts and promote changes in how faculty and students treat 299 courses.

The following may be topics to consider when formulating goals and expectations:

- timing and duration of expected interactions between faculty and students (office hours, reading groups, lab meetings, etc.)
- participation in lab or group activities (presentations at lab or group meetings, etc.)
- academic outputs stemming from research in lab, field, archive, or other environments
- development of data analyses, scholarly activities, or progress in writing
- participation in scholarly events such as presentations at seminars, conferences, workshops
- quality of scholarly or creative product

By clarifying goals and expectations for 299 courses at the start of each quarter, faculty may be able to avoid conflicts that lead to Incompletes or No Credit grades and confusion about coursework vs. employment.

Adapted from guidelines developed by the UC Davis Graduate Council.

My GSRs are Unionized: What Do I Do Now?

Dr. Lidia Kos

Dr. Kate Sweeny

Dr. Emma Wilson

Cheryl Gerry

Patrick Napier

Graduate Division

Where we came from, where we are now

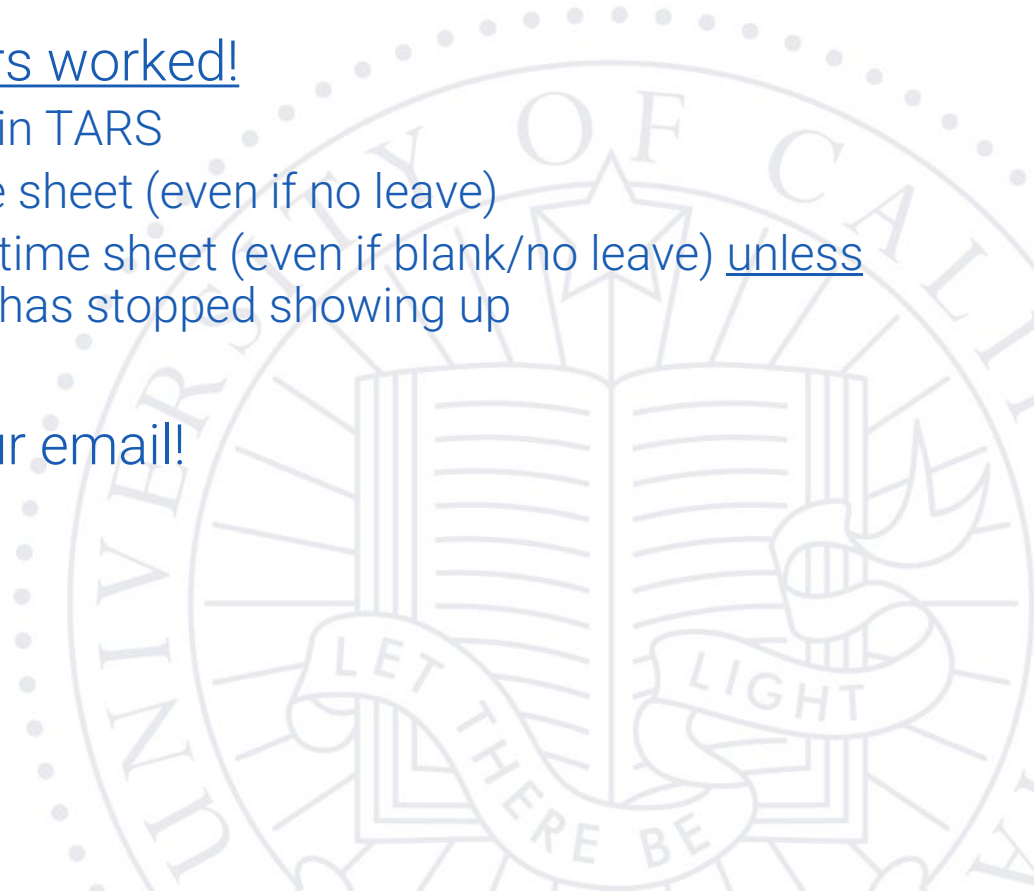
- Before: TAs were unionized, GSRs were not
- December 2022: Contracts finalized, GSRs officially in the union
 - Contract expires May 2025
- What does that mean in practice?
 - GSRs have more options to grieve
 - GSRs have more rights and privileges
- Who is covered by the contract?
 - Student funded on your grant? ✓
 - Student on central fellowship? ✗
 - Student on external fellowship? ? (it depends – ask Grad Division!)

Key contract provisions (new policies)

- Percentage appointment determined by workload, not funds
- Written notification of appointment
 - Starting Winter 2024, must include a description of duties
 - Letter of expectations and employment DoD are required, academic DoD or syllabus is strongly recommended
- Personal time off (PTO) = 1 day per month
 - 3 month appointment, 3 days available immediately (does not roll over)
 - Requires supervisor permission (get in writing and monitor total!)
- Short-term (2 days/quarter) and long-term leaves (8 weeks/year)
 - Serious health condition, caretaking, birth/adoption, military, etc.
 - Requests go through leave coordinators (Shared Services Center)
 - Consult with Grad Division before recommending/approving long-term leave

Time Reporting

- Key point: Not reporting hours worked!
 - Student reports days of leave in TARS
 - Student submits monthly time sheet (even if no leave)
 - Supervisor approves monthly time sheet (even if blank/no leave) unless leave is inaccurate or student has stopped showing up
- More information: Check your email!



Wages/stipends

- New “increments,” now 1 through 6
- Spring 2023: Mapping old steps to new points/increments (done)
- Fall 2023: Experience “points” kicked in
 - Key principle: No continuing student’s stipend should go down
 - Experience = UCR only, quarter or equivalent (e.g., 10 weeks of summer; summers not counted for TAs), at least 25% appointment
 - TA experience does not count for GSR increments, and vice versa
 - GSR experience is assessed each June; TA experience is rolling
 - 3 quarters (or equivalent) = 1 additional increment, up to increment 3 (higher increments are optional and potentially problematic)
- Fall 2024: Same process, higher stipends

Academic vs. employment

- Tricky! Lots of overlap, but new risks
 - Academic: Undertaken in pursuit of a defined academic goal that is not always associated with a precise expectation of time or with predetermined activities; defined by progress toward the dissertation or thesis project, including through a collection of intermediate goals and learning outcomes.
 - Employment: Performed as a service for a defined period of time or for a specified set of activities.
- 50% appointment = 20 hours/week on average (220 per quarter)
 - If they go over, grievance and/or overtime pay
- Food for thought:
 - If your student was a TA for one quarter, what duties would you take away?
 - How would you run things if your student was paid on your grant but not academically interested in the project?
- Despite the contract, Graduate Division policies still apply
 - Poor academic performance = sanctions, disqualification
 - Includes poor performance on *academic* research goals

Academic

To dedicate full time and effort toward completing degree requirements

- Learn the existing theories, practices, and research methods of your discipline and to apply these in your research.
- Discover and pursue a unique topic of research to construct new knowledge and to apply this knowledge to a problem of your interest.
- Adopt the highest integrity and maintain ethical standards in all aspects of your work, especially in the tasks of collecting, analyzing, and presenting research data.
- Contribute to the scholarly discourse of the discipline through presentations, publications, and professional engagement and service.
- Take responsibility for keeping informed of and complying with regulations and policies and to complete all required paperwork and other degree obligations in a timely fashion.

Employment

Core Hours in Lab/Office

You are to be physically present in the lab and/or office **<<Insert Information>>** **<<days / hour>>** hours per week.

You are to participate actively in the conduct of research, as described below:

- Research and collect data through complex techniques and procedures, library research, structured interviews, or other project specific methodology.
- Collect, interpret, synthesize, and analyze data/information.
- Schedule, organize, and report on status of research activities.
- Plan and modify research techniques, procedures, tests, equipment, or software management.
- Prepare materials for Human Subjects Committee review.
- Prepare interview questions.
- Recruit and/or interview subjects.
- Summarize interviews.
- Maintain accurate records of interviews, safeguarding the confidentiality of subjects, as necessary.
- Summarize project/research results.
- Assist in preparation of materials for submission to granting agencies and foundations.
- Prepare progress reports for the PI and/or funding agency.
- Write and edit materials for publication and presentation.
- Conduct literature reviews.
- Prepare other articles, reports, and presentations.

Best contacts when things go awry

- Employment issues: Labor Relations and AP
 - Esperanza Steward (AP), Michelle Calanchini (LR, grievances)
 - Also Patrick Napier (Grad Division), Katina Napper (AP)
- Academic issues (including research performance)
 - Kate Sweeny (Grad Division), Kara Oswald (Grad Division)
- Conduct issues
 - Academic misconduct: Kate Sweeny (Grad Division)
 - General behavioral problems: SCAIP
 - Discrimination or harassment: Title IX
- Always helpful
 - Philip Brisk, VPAR
 - Andrew Larratt-Smith, Ombuds