

From: Dean of Graduate Education Susan L. Ettner

Sent: Wednesday, November 8, 2023 10:31 AM

Subject: Financial Support for Holistic Doctoral Admissions Rubrics



To: Deans, Department Chairs, Graduate Vice-Chairs, MSOs and SAOs

What you need to know:

- The Graduate Council voted in June 2023 to revise UCLA’s Guidelines for the Graduate Admissions Process to encourage the use of rubrics in graduate admissions.
- To further encourage this shift, the Division of Graduate Education is offering incentives of \$10,000 in graduate student support to state-supported doctoral programs that develop new — or revise existing — rubrics. See the [Application for Admissions Rubrics Incentives](#).
- Deadline to apply for funding is May 10.
- The “Admissions” menu of [Go.Grad](#) has resources to assist programs with rubric development and DGE staff are available for live trainings or consults.

Dear Colleagues:

Admissions rubrics are tools developed by departmental faculty to track applicant qualities that ensure success in their program. Rubrics ensure fairness and equity in the admissions process by contextualizing candidates’ achievements in relation to their available opportunities. Rubrics ensure that each evaluator is looking for the same qualifications,

in the same places, in the same way, in each application. In 2016, a [report from the Council of Graduate Schools \(PDF\)](#) recommended that faculty be provided “with rubrics for evaluating applicants so that admissions criteria are more transparent and consistently applied” and noted that an added benefit of rubrics is “making evaluation processes more efficient and allowing faculty to more easily compare their assessments.”

In light of a growing body of research demonstrating the effectiveness of rubrics and in conjunction with UCLA’s *Guidelines for the Graduate Admissions Process*, which requires each graduate program to “have written descriptions of its standards and procedures for admissions,” the Graduate Council voted in June 2023 to amend the guidelines to encourage the development and use of rubrics. Instead of simply requiring written descriptions, the guidelines now encourage programs “to outline their standards in the form of a rubric — to be used by each evaluator with each applicant — that clearly articulates the qualities of a successful applicant, where evaluators seek evidence of those qualities, and how those qualities are ranked.” The Graduate Council has charged the Division of Graduate Education (DGE) with collecting and tracking each graduate program’s “written descriptions of its standards and procedures for admissions.”

Although graduate programs are not required to have those descriptions in the form of rubrics, rubrics are strongly recommended. The DGE is pleased to encourage departments to develop and use admission rubrics by offering \$10,000 in graduate student support per doctoral program to support this transition. These funds are also available to departments that are already using rubrics, but wish to update them.

At a minimum, the rubrics should account for the following:

- **Academic Preparedness and Scholarly Potential** – While the admissions committee may look to traditional metrics such as GPA, standardized tests, and a record of prior achievement, reviewers are also encouraged to consider the depth and breadth of a candidate’s prior coursework, to what extent the candidate has taken advantage of available opportunities (including, but not

limited to, study abroad, research-specific coursework, and independent scholarly or creative inquiry, both in and out of the classroom), and whether the candidate has participated in a scholarly training program such as MARC U*Star, LSAMP, or a TRIO program such as McNair or Student Support Services.

- **Socio-Emotional Attributes** – Research is increasingly demonstrating that qualities such as perseverance, leadership, resourcefulness, initiative, and creativity are better predictors of graduate student success than more traditional measures. Evidence of these qualities can be found in, for example, the progression of a candidate’s academic performance over time, the range and duration of their extracurricular involvements and community service, and their ability to identify and access support networks and overcome challenges.
- **Program Alignment** – The admissions committee should assess whether the program has adequate mentoring resources to support the candidate’s proposed field of inquiry.
- **Contributions to Diversity** – The admissions committee should consider whether the candidate's research, work, volunteer, or life experience demonstrates an interest in continued learning and growth around issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Sample rubrics from across campus are available on Go.Grad under the Admissions menu.

To apply, please submit the [Application for Admissions Rubrics Incentives](#) before May 10, 2024. Applications will be reviewed by a team comprising the DGE Associate Deans and senior staff from the DGE’s Diversity, Inclusion, and Admissions (DIA) unit. Applications will be evaluated to ensure that the department has incorporated faculty input into its rubric development and implementation process; appropriately balanced and contextualized each element of an applicant’s file; and provided adequate training on the use of the rubric by admissions committee members.

Departments receiving these incentive funds must also commit to sending at least one faculty representative to a meeting in Spring 2024 to

share information regarding their department's admissions rubric development and implementation processes.

For any questions regarding this opportunity, please reach out to the DIA team via the [Graduate Education Portal](#) or by emailing AskGrad@grad.ucla.edu. The DGE looks forward to supporting your efforts to adopt a more consistent and inclusive review process.

Best regards,

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Dean of Graduate Education

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The UCLA logo is centered within a solid blue horizontal bar. The letters "UCLA" are rendered in a white, bold, sans-serif font.