



UC Graduate and Professional Council Statement on Open-Access Theses Proposal

The UC Graduate and Professional Council has become aware of policy proposal “Open Access for Theses and Dissertations” to require all graduate student theses and dissertations to be published in the eScholarship open-access repository. While we are broadly in support of the general goal of increasing public access to scientific work, we have concerns about the policy as written that we believe merit delay and possible revisions before implementation.

First, we believe that there needs to be more time to solicit feedback from relevant graduate student populations. Though it has been open for comment, it has not been widely publicized and discussed so that graduate students from all fields knew to comment on it. There should be a strong consultation with many graduate students, representing a broad array of disciplines and campuses, before a system-wide policy is put forward.

Second, we have concerns about the the limits of the embargo time and the ability to opt-out of the policy. For many in the sciences, publication of empirical theses often are already open-access, or may be required by federally funded grants. But for other fields in the arts and humanities where works are often turned in books and monographs, putting this work into an open-access repository may be a much harder requirement to meet without burdening students. They may need significantly longer embargo periods, guarantees of embargo (rather than requiring approval), and possibilities for waiving the requirement, or other considerations that merit further review and deepers consultation with students who would be affected by this policy.

Finally, we see that this policy may create a double standard between how work done by graduate students and work done by professors is treated. Like graduate theses, professors conduct research and publish manuscripts in the course of their work at the university. They are required to have their scholarly articles open-access, but may not be required to deposit work that would be turned into a book, and are allowed to request a opt out for a specific work or specified period of time. Work by graduate students, including theses and dissertations, deserve similar considerations and more assurance of allowance of embargoes.

We encourage Academic Affairs to not implement this proposal at this time, and look forward to working with relevant administrators to help solicit and respond to feedback from a wider variety of graduate students in the UC system.

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