



June 29, 2022

Dear Deans, Chairs, and Graduate Student Affairs Officers,

We write to you today about changes to the Admissions Policy pertaining to Evaluation of Applicants in the [Guide to Graduate Policy](#) that were approved by the Graduate Council at its May 2, 2022 meeting.

What is changing:

The following replaces the first paragraph of [B.1.3](#) (Evaluation of Applicants) of the Admissions Policy in the [Guide to Graduate Policy](#):

Admission to graduate study at Berkeley is granted on a competitive and equitable basis. The Graduate Council encourages programs to develop diverse communities of graduate scholars. A transparent admissions process provides assurance to faculty, Graduate Council, and Graduate Division that all applicants are reviewed equitably. Accordingly, graduate programs are required to:

- a. Have an established **graduate admissions committee**, whose term and composition are determined by program faculty. Programs are encouraged to consider committees that are diverse and may be composed of faculty, staff, graduate students and/or alumni, as appropriate.
- b. Develop Guidelines for Graduate Admissions. If appropriate, these would be separate for each graduate degree program in the department. These guidelines should be made available to the Graduate Division and all graduate admissions committee members at the start of each graduate admissions cycle and contain (but are not limited to) the following components:
 - i. Outline of the **admissions committee makeup**;
 - ii. **Mission Statement and goals** of the particular graduate program, including any research, educational, and diversity goals;
 - iii. **Procedures for the holistic review and evaluation** of graduate applicants, including a description of the department's assessment protocol for graduate applications, both qualitative and quantitative, as applicable (e.g. evaluative criteria, rubric, checklist, rating scale, etc.);
- c. Program admission committees should review the *Graduate Council Statement: "Diversity in Graduate Student Recruitment and Selection"* to ensure that review includes a variety of criteria to facilitate the selection of applicants who are well-qualified and would contribute to the university's goals in this area.

Why are these changes happening:

A transparent admissions process provides assurance to faculty, Graduate Council, and Graduate Division that all applicants are reviewed equitably and provides departments and the university with protection from legal challenges.

Departmental policies for admissions should follow best practices for holistic admissions, be transparent and equitable regarding their assessment protocols, and be flexible to account for a particular



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department's research, educational, and community goals. It is intentionally broad to allow faculty to make admissions policies and decisions that are best suited for their program. The goal is to ensure that faculty have discussed, come to agreement on, and documented the graduate program's goals, admissions criteria, and evaluation process.

An added benefit for departments engaged in transparent, policy-driven holistic admissions is that they will be protected should there be an audit of graduate admissions, as UCOP has done for undergraduate admissions, or a lawsuit. Without established, written admission policies, departments could be susceptible to scrutiny and legal challenges.

This policy is intended to replace current [applicant ranking review requirements](#), which were not tied to holistic admissions practices and were not considered policy.

What support can you expect from the Graduate Division?

We realize that for some this may require a change to your admissions procedures. The Graduate Division will be providing a staff member that will be available to consult on how to operationalize this change. Optional training opportunities will also be made available in October and November.

Now what?

Please take time to circulate this policy change among your departmental stakeholders and discuss how you might provide documentation of the requirements outlined above. We look forward to following up in August when we will begin circulating a workshop and consulting calendar to provide your program with any necessary assistance you will require to implement these changes ahead of the review of applications beginning December 1, 2022.

We appreciate your partnership in realizing this change. We have [developed this set of FAQs](#) to answer any immediate questions you may have. If you have additional questions or need assistance, please contact Graduate Admissions at graddean@berkeley.edu.

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Chair, Graduate Council

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