



**CALIFORNIA STATE POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY, POMONA  
POLICY NO: 1424\***

**MASTER’S DEGREE REQUIREMENTS**

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1.0 Election of Requirements

Graduate students remaining in continuous attendance may elect to meet the degree requirements in effect either (1) at the time they take their first course as a conditional or unconditional student in that degree program or (2) at the time they graduate. Substitutions for discontinued courses may be authorized or required.

2.0 General Requirements

The requirements for graduation depend upon the master’s degree program undertaken and upon the major field.

The following requirements apply to all master’s degrees offered by the university:

All Master’s degrees shall be a minimum of 30 semester units of approved graduate work completed within a maximum of seven years\*\*, with the restrictions that:

- 2.1 At least 70% of the units shall be completed in residence.
- 2.2 At least 60% of the units shall be in stand-alone graduate level courses (those not scheduled to meet at the same time, in the same room and with the same instructor as an undergraduate level course)\*\*\*.

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\* Revised AY 2016-2017

\*\* An extension of the time beyond the limit of seven years may be granted by the lead authority in the Office of Academic Programs (or designee) if warranted by individual circumstances and if the outdated work is validated by examination, in the relevant course or subject field of work or such other demonstration of competence as may be prescribed, such as directly relevant work experience. Under no circumstances will the time limit be extended beyond 9 years. A maximum of nine (9) units may be recertified. Only Cal Poly Pomona coursework is eligible for recertification.

\*\*\* If Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations is amended in a manner that conflicts with the requirement that 60% of the units be graduate level courses, then the new legally required percentage of units will be the percentage of units required for a Master’s degree on this campus.



- 2.3 Programs shall contain a collection of specified major required courses\*\*\*\* (core) that all students in the program complete for the degree. The purpose of the major required curriculum is to ensure that there are sufficient opportunities for students to achieve the program’s learning outcomes. The major required courses shall comprise the majority of the units in the degree program.
- 2.4 All courses for a Master’s program shall normally be at the 4000 level or higher, but students may take 3000 level courses as needed if approved by the program’s graduate coordinator.
- 2.5 No more than 6 units may be designated for the culminating experience. A total limit of 9 transfer and/or extension and/or semester units petitioned for graduate credit may be included on a master’s contract.
- 2.6 All 6000-6990 courses are open only to graduate students classified as unconditional.
- 2.7 A minimum of 3.0 (B) average must be earned in all graduate work taken at Cal Poly, Pomona while in post baccalaureate standing and in degree programs. No course with a grade lower than “C” (2.0) may apply toward the fulfillment of degree requirements. Once a graduate study contract has been established, courses may only be moved to or from the contract by means of a properly approved graduate petition. Contract courses with a grade of “F” must be repeated with a passing grade.
- 2.8 A course may not be used for credit toward both a baccalaureate and a master’s degree.
- 2.9 A graduation check request must be submitted to the Registrar’s Office during the semester before graduation.
- 2.10 A Culminating Experience is required in all programs. See Section 3.0.
- 2.11 A favorable vote of the department, college, or center faculty is required before the degree may be conferred.

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\*\*\*\*The set of courses that are either required for all options within a major or achieve the learning outcomes common to all options within a major. It is possible for a group of courses to achieve the same set of learning outcomes, even if not all students are required to complete the same set of core courses. It is expected that most core courses will be the same for all options, but some portion of the core courses may differ between options, provided that the same learning outcomes are addressed. In particular, the allowable portion shall be interpreted flexibly for programs that need to comply with state requirements for teacher credentialing, discipline-specific accreditation requirements, or other external regulations. However, all students must be provided equal opportunity to achieve all program learning outcomes. Core courses can include courses that are “double-counted” to satisfy GE and major requirements but shall not include courses only taken to satisfy GE requirements.



- 2.12 A graduate student who expects to receive a degree at the end of any semester must complete an application for graduation in the Registrar’s Office prior to the deadline listed in the academic calendar. The student must be enrolled in the university the semester he/she graduates. Students seeking a master’s degree will be held responsible for meeting requirements applicable to the program of their choice and for fulfilling general master’s degree requirements.
- 2.13 Culminating Experience units cannot be used to substitute required or elective units.
- 2.14 There is no grade forgiveness in graduate programs.

### 3.0 Culminating Experiences

#### 3.1 Selection of Culminating Experience

In programs that allow students to choose from among more than one type of culminating experience, students shall select their culminating experience with guidance from their advisor before advancement to candidacy. Students may attempt the chosen culminating experience a maximum of two times. Once enrolled in a particular culminating experience, students may not switch to an alternative experience.

#### 3.2 Writing Proficiency

Graduate study deals with more complex ideas and demands more sophisticated techniques, searching analysis, creative thinking, and time than undergraduate study. The research required is extensive in both primary and secondary sources and a high quality of writing is expected. Demonstration of advanced-level writing proficiency shall be completed through fulfillment of the Graduation Writing Test requirement before Advancement to Candidacy.

#### 3.3 Theses

A thesis is the written product of a systematic study of a significant problem. It identifies the problem, states the major assumptions, explains the significance of the undertaking, sets forth the sources for and methods of gathering information, analyzes the data, and offers a conclusion or recommendation. The finished product evidences originality, critical and independent thinking, appropriate organization and format, and thorough documentation.



A thesis is distinguished by certain elements such as an introduction to the study, a review of the literature, a methodology section, results, summary, and recommendations for further research. There may be a difference between the elements found in a quantitative thesis versus those found in a non-quantitative (qualitative) thesis. The thesis committee will be most concerned with the manner in which the material is researched, organized, developed, and presented.

An oral defense of a thesis shall be required. It will include a presentation by the master’s candidate to the Thesis Committee. The Committee chair may approve oral defenses undertaken partly or wholly in mediated environments, including via conference call or on-line, provided that the defense takes place in “real time.” Any member of the University community may attend the defense. The oral defense shall be graded pass/fail. It shall be documented by a signed statement attesting to the outcome of the defense.

The composition, procedures, and other rules pertaining to Master’s thesis committees shall be governed by Senate Report AS-2468-145/AA.

### 3.4 Projects

A project is a significant undertaking appropriate to the fine and applied arts or to professional fields, and to professional applications of other subjects. It evidences originality and independent thinking, appropriate form and organization, and a rationale. It is described and summarized in a written abstract that includes the project's significance, objectives, methodology and a conclusion or recommendation.

Types of projects may include but are not limited to:

- A Creative Project: an original contribution to the verbal, visual, or performing arts. Examples include a music recital; a musical composition; an interactive multimedia project; a completed novel or play; a completed collection of short stories or poems; direction of a theatrical production; a gallery showing of works of art.
- A Research Project: a project that contributes to the professions, by adding to technical/professional knowledge in the professional field. Examples include building a device; designing an experiment; a field study; a case study.



- A Portfolio Project: a collection of new and re-envisioned work including elements of revision, reflection, analysis, and application of theoretical concepts and practical strategies. Material completed previous to the beginning of the culminating project must be re-evaluated.

The Project Committee will be most concerned with the manner in which the material is researched, organized, developed, and presented. The written document describing the project shall be filed in the Library. In cases where the project is a manual or handbook, the project itself is placed in the appendix, while sections in the main body of the text are tailored to introduce, justify, and validate the study or creative effort.

An oral defense may be required, at the discretion of the program. If required, an oral defense of a project shall include a presentation by the master’s candidate to the Project Committee, and/or a period of questioning directed to the master’s candidate by the committee.

### 3.5 Comprehensive Exams

A comprehensive examination is an assessment of the student’s ability to integrate the knowledge of the area, show critical and independent thinking, and demonstrate a mastery of the subject matter. The results of the examination evidences independent thinking, appropriate organization, critical analysis, and accuracy of documentation. Comprehensive exams test a student’s ability to think and write under a time constraint that parallels the demands student will face in their professional careers.

Departments that include the comprehensive exam as a culminating experience shall offer the exam at least once a year. Before administration of an exam, a minimum of two faculty shall evaluate the exam’s quality and adequacy for a culminating experience. A minimum of two faculty will evaluate the student’s responses.

Departments shall be responsible for developing and posting an implementation statement that includes the following elements:

- The format of the exam, written or oral, or some combination of the two.
- Frequency of offerings and length of the exam.
- The relative emphasis on breadth and depth of knowledge



- Procedures for students to prepare for the exam
- Methods for development of the examination
- Method of assessment of the examination
- Grading system (letter grade or credit/no credit) and grading criteria
- Options for retaking a portion of or the entire exam in those instances where the student does not pass the exam