Regulations Governing Graduate Students

In addition to reviewing policies and definitions included in this section, you may want to consult the "Academic Policies and Regulations" section of the University Catalog for information concerning general University policies that apply to all students. The Graduate School also offers a publically available Guide to Graduate Studies: Policies, Procedures, & Format, which gives additional information on planning a master's degree program, meeting all requirements, and writing a thesis.

If you plan to pursue a second bachelor's degree, you should refer to the section "Bachelor's Degree Requirements," and should consult the Academic Evaluations section of the Office of Academic Advising Programs for an evaluation of your status for meeting the degree requirements.

Following is an overview of policies applicable to master's degree, credential, certificate, and unclassified students as set forth by the Graduate School. For information on specific departmental regulations, refer to the master's degree program descriptions in the academic programs section of this catalog.

As a master's degree student, you are governed by the rules in effect at the time of your admission to conditionally classified status for that degree. If you are making normal progress towards the degree and do not interrupt your program, you may elect to meet the degree requirements in effect either at the time of your admission to conditionally classified status or in the term that you complete all requirements for the degree, except that substitutions for discontinued courses may be authorized or required by the academic department offering the degree.

If you interrupt a program, you may be subject to the requirements in effect at the time of readmission.

Student Responsibility

The University staff and faculty, particularly those in the Graduate School, the department and, in the case of master's degree students, the graduate coordinator and graduate advisory committee, are here to provide advice and assistance in completing the application and degree or credential program. Although this assistance will help you fulfill the necessary requirements, ultimately you are responsible for meeting all requirements and deadlines, academic and administrative, as detailed in this catalog or elsewhere as specified by the Graduate School or your department. Preparing a Master's Degree Program Plan in consultation with your graduate coordinator and graduate advisory committee and submitting it to the Graduate School during your first semester will help significantly in insuring that you meet university requirements in a timely manner. Should you have questions on policies or procedures at any point in your program, both your department and the Graduate School are available to help you.

Graduate Coordinators

Each graduate program has a designated graduate coordinator who is responsible for reviewing applications, assisting students in developing programs of study, endorsing study plans, maintaining records of all students enrolled in the program, and supplying information requested by the graduate dean. The graduate coordinator for your discipline will be able to respond to specific program questions.

Change in Classification

A change in classification is defined as advancement in the master's program from conditionally classified to classified status, or from classified status to candidacy. Normally a change occurs after specified course work and university requirements have been met, and the change is initiated by the student with a request to the graduate coordinator.

Change of Discipline

You may change from one master's degree program to another through an application process in the Graduate School. Admission to one degree program does not insure admission to another, and you must satisfy all admission requirements of the new program in effect at the time of the change.

Multiple Degree Objectives

You may become a candidate for more than one graduate degree providing you complete separate programs of study in different graduate programs. No course may be counted towards a master's degree that has been counted towards any previous degree at any institution. An exception to this restriction is allowed for the terminal MPA program. The MPA program description in this catalog can be consulted for more information. A student may not complete two master's degrees in the same discipline even though an academic department may offer various emphases within the field of study. Pursuing two graduate degrees concurrently requires approval of both departments.

You may also pursue both a master's degree and a second bachelor's degree concurrently. However, no course may be counted towards both objectives.

Continuous Enrollment

Students pursuing a master's degree must enroll each semester until the degree is awarded. Both enrollment as a regular student and adjutment enrollment satisfy this continuous enrollment requirement. (Special Session and Open University enrollments do not.) Adjunct enrollment consists of registration in GRST 899 through the Center for Regional and Continuing Education, for which an academic department may offer courses. Registration in GRST 899 must be completed by the end of the fourth week of classes each semester (the University census date). Late fees are charged for non-compliance with this policy. No credit is earned for adjunct enrollment, but it allows you to maintain your status in the master's degree program and to make minimal use of selected campus resources, including the library, laboratories, computer facilities, faculty advisors, and the thesis editor. Adjunct enrollment serves both students who have finished their course work but have not yet met all degree requirements (e.g., terminal project, incomplete grade, etc.), and those who choose not to enroll in regular classes for a semester. However, it is not to be used to postpone the start of graduate study, and you may not enroll in GRST 899 for the semester of your admission to a master's degree program. Transcripts will be kept for students who have attended another school while on adjunct enrollment at CSU, Chico.

Master's degree students who do not maintain continuous enrollment may be required to reapply to the program that they have interrupted when they wish to return. They may be subject to any new admission requirements and, if readmitted, may be held to any new degree requirements. In addition, they will be required to petition to resume the program and complete late registration in GRST 899 for the first two semesters that they were out of compliance with the continuous enrollment policy. When students are required to reapply for the return, the application fee will be waived upon completion of the GRST 899 late registrations. This policy applies to all master's degree programs, including those who have completed all of the courses required for their programs.

Postbaccalaureate Leave of Absence

If you are not in a master's degree program and you wish to break your enrollment in the University, you may not register in GRST 899 to maintain continuing status. Instead, credential, certificate, and unclassified students in good standing may request to take a leave of absence from their program for a maximum of two consecutive semesters. You must have been an enrolled student for the semester immediately preceding the leave, and submit your request no later than the fourth week of the first semester of the leave. The form to request a postbaccalaureate leave of absence is available from the Graduate School.

Maintaining Good Academic Standing

Master's Degree Students

As a student admitted to a master's degree program, you must maintain a minimum 3.0 grade point average in each of the following three categories: all course work taken at any accredited institution subsequent to admission to the master's program; all course work taken at CSU, Chico subsequent to admission to the program; and all courses taken in fulfillment of your approved program. Failure to maintain a 3.0 average in any category will result in academic probation in the master's program. Failure to remedy the deficiency in a master's program will not be allowed to enroll in any regular session of the University for at least one year, and must reapply and be admitted to a program in order to return to regular enrollment.

If your major department finds that you do not satisfy established criteria in the discipline, you will be terminated in that discipline upon receipt by the Graduate School of the graduate coordinator requesting such termination.

All Postbaccalaureate Students

You will be placed on academic probation for any semester of enrollment in which either your CSU, Chico grade point average or your cumulative grade point average (which includes all transferred work) falls below 2.0 for all post-baccalaureate coursework. While on academic probation, you will become subject to academic disqualification if at the end of a spring semester of enrollment either your Chico or cumulative grade point average remains below 2.0. If disqualified, you will not be allowed to continue in the University for at least a year and must be reinstated and readmitted to return. Disqualified students may take Special Session courses through the Center for Regional and Continuing Education but will not be allowed to take courses through the Open University program without special permission.

You may also become subject to academic disqualification while on academic probation if your cumulative grade point average falls below 1.0 and the cumulative grade point average is so low that in view of your overall educational record, it seems unlikely that the deficiency will be removed within a reasonable period.
Definition of a Full-Time Graduate Student

Full-time graduate students are those who are admitted to a master's degree program and carry at least 8 semester units. For students with appointments as graduate assistants, teaching associates, or part-time faculty, half-time (20 hours/week) employment may be regarded as the equivalent of 4 semester units of graduate course work in determining full-time status. Appointments for fewer than 20 hours/week are pro-rated in determining full-time status.

Note: For purposes of financial aid eligibility, students may not be allowed to count employment towards their full-time status; please consult a financial aid counselor.

Graduate Credit for Excess Units Taken as an Undergraduate

Excess units are defined as units completed in addition to the requirements for the baccalaureate. Chico students who meet certain conditions may have excess units taken in their final undergraduate semester approved for graduate credit towards a master's degree. To request approval of these units, you must:

1. Have a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.75 at the start of your final undergraduate semester.
2. Be within 9 units of completing all baccalaureate requirements at the start of your final undergraduate semester.
3. Take no more than 9 units of 400/500/600-level courses for graduate credit, with a total enrollment in units required for the baccalaureate and units taken for graduate credit not to exceed 15.
4. Submit a petition for the graduate credit within the first month of your enrollment in the courses. Include the supplementary attachment to confirm that you will be held to graduate requirements in each 400/500-level course listed.

The petition process is initiated in the Graduate School. After you have been cleared for the baccalaureate your petition will be reviewed to determine that the requested units are in excess of the baccalaureate and that you have met the policy requirements. You will be notified of the final outcome when the petition review has been completed.

If you fail to graduate at the end of the semester or summer session during which the excess units were taken, the units will not be awarded graduate credit. All approved excess units will be noted on the record. However, inclusion of the units in a master's degree program is subject to approval by your individual graduate advisory committee.

Note: The procedure to identify excess units for a credential objective is different than the one described above. A credential student wishing to apply units towards the fifth-year credential requirement must indicate that intention on the baccalaureate major clearance form.

Master's Degree Courses

While a graduate student is not prohibited from enrolling in courses at any level, only courses in the 400, 500, or 600 series may be counted towards a master's degree program. Courses numbered 400–599 are acceptable as credit towards a master's degree unless otherwise noted in the course description. Graduate students enrolled in 400/500-level courses will be held to more rigorous requirements than undergraduates and must earn a grade of C– or better to count them towards their program. Courses numbered 600–699 are open only to master's degree students, with certain exceptions, and are defined as requiring “the identification of a theory or principle; the application of theory to new ideas, problems, and materials; extensive use of bibliographic and other resource materials with emphasis on primary sources of data; and demonstration of competence in the scholarly presentation of the results of independent study.”

At least 60% of the total units required for a master's degree program must be in stand-alone 600-level courses (those not cross-listed with 400/500-level courses).

Any course to be counted towards a master's degree program must be acceptable for graduate credit by the discipline offering the course (i.e., a 400/500/600-level course that is not acceptable for its department's master's degree cannot be counted towards a master's degree in another discipline).

Independent Study (597/697), Comprehensive Examination (696), and Master's Thesis (699)

No more than a combined total of 10 units of Independent Study (597/697), Comprehensive Examination (696), and Master's Study (699) may be included in a master's degree program. A maximum of 3 units of Comprehensive Examination (696) and 6 units of Master's Study (699) is allowed.

Independent Study (597/697), open to any post-baccalaureate student, is a course designated for a specific research project supervised by an authorized member of the faculty. Credit for an Independent Study (597/697) is controlled by the academic department offering the course, and the faculty member directing the study assigns either a letter grade or a CR/NC (credit/no credit) grade when the course is completed. You may receive either an RP (report in progress) or an I (incomplete) for a 597/697 course that is not completed in the semester of enrollment. You must complete course requirements and have the RP or I replaced with either a letter grade or a CR within one year of the date of the original grade assignment or a grade of IC (incomplete charged) or NC will be assigned.

Comprehensive Examination (696) is a course designated in some graduate programs to give credit for the extensive research and preparation involved in the comprehensive examination culminating activity. In programs that offer the Comprehensive Examination course, a maximum of 3 units of 696 credit may be awarded. The course should be taken in the semester that you plan to complete the comprehensive examination, and a CR/NC grade is assigned. Master's Study (699) is separated into a thesis and supporting research (offered as 699T for 1.0 to 6.0 units) or a project as defined by the individual department (offered as 699P for 1.0 to 6.0 units). In programs, course descriptions, and policy discussions, the term may be referred to without distinction as a thesis or project.

Enrollment in the 699 course is supervised by the chair of your graduate advisory committee, and 1–6 units of Master's Study credit will be received for the completion of a thesis or project and the supporting research component. The number of units awarded is determined by your academic department. However, in no case may you enroll in, or receive credit for, more units of 699 than are required for your individual program. Enrollment in 699 is required if you are completing a thesis or project, and the course may not be taken as Special Session or Open University credit. Normally, enrollment in 699 is limited to classified students or candidates in a master's degree program, although restrictions vary among departments. All 699 courses are assigned a grade of RP until all degree requirements are successfully completed, and a grade of CR is assigned at that time.

An RP assigned to a 699 course must be replaced with a CR within the time period allowed for the completion of the master's degree (i.e., as specified by your department, five or seven years for a terminal master's degree). Failure to complete the work within the specified time period will result in a grade of NC.

Applying for Graduation with the Master's Degree and Participation in the Master's Commencement

Graduation application materials and instructions are available for master's degree candidates from the Graduate School. You must apply for graduation and complete the culminating activity for your master's degree program by the applicable deadlines listed in the Academic Calendar. You may not receive more than one degree during any graduation period (i.e., fall, spring, or summer).

It is your responsibility to meet all University and departmental requirements as well as administrative deadlines for graduation. A well-planned course of study and a clear understanding of the requirements will help to avoid last-minute problems and graduation delays.

A Commencement ceremony for master's graduates is held once a year at the end of the spring semester. You are eligible to participate in the ceremony if you graduated. You will be notified of the previous summer session or fall semester, or if you will graduate at the completion of the spring semester.

Graduation with Distinction/Outstanding Thesis and Project Awards

It is possible to receive the master's degree with distinction by maintaining a 3.9 grade point average for all approved program course work and satisfying criteria established by the graduate committee of the program offering the degree. Upon recommendation of the appropriate graduate coordinator, an academic dean may award graduation with distinction to a student in his or her college who has a grade point average below 3.9. Students graduating with distinction are recognized at commencement and receive a special diploma; the notation “with distinction” is posted with the degree on the transcript.

An Outstanding Thesis Award, initiated in 1988, and an Outstanding Project Award, initiated in 1991, allow special recognition of one thesis and one project each year. The outstanding thesis may be submitted to the Distinguished Thesis competition sponsored by the Western Association of Graduate Schools.
Library Privileges for Graduate Students
The following privileges are granted to graduate students:

1. The loan period for graduate students is five weeks (15 days).
2. As a currently enrolled graduate student with a valid ID, you have borrowing privileges at any other California State University library. Mutual library privileges are subject to the regulations of the lending library, and Chico ID cards are honored at the discretion of the lending library.
3. You may reserve one of the lockers that are available in the library for graduate students by making application at the Circulation Desk and by paying a refundable deposit and a service fee.

Maximum Course Load
Master's degree students may not register for more than 16 units of work in any semester without the approval of the Graduate School. The typical master's degree requires two years for completion, and it is strongly recommended that master's degree students register for no more than 12 units each semester. Students pursuing a second bachelor's degree, credential, or certificate are held to the same enrollment limitations as undergraduate students.

Repeating Courses with Forgiveness
Once you have a bachelor's degree, you may not raise your undergraduate grade point average by repeating a course originally taken as an undergraduate. If you wish to repeat a postbaccalaureate course with forgiveness of the original grade, you must file a petition in the Graduate School. The petition must be approved by the appropriate program advisor, and approval may be granted according to the following stipulations:
1. The earlier attempt resulted in a grade of B– or lower.
2. A maximum of one course may be repeated with forgiveness (unless the undergraduate policy is applicable as indicated below).
3. No regression is allowed.
4. A course which may be taken more than once for credit may not be repeated with forgiveness.
5. Equivalency must be clearly established for courses originally completed at another institution.
6. You may not petition to repeat at another institution a course which was originally taken at CSU, Chico.
7. You must be enrolled in the class.
8. The grade in the original course was not a result of academic misconduct, documented through the Office of Student Judicial Affairs as a violation of the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities (EM 96–38) and Policy on Academic Integrity (EM 04–36).

If the petition is approved, only the last grade earned in the course will be calculated in the grade point average. If a petition to repeat with forgiveness is not submitted or approved and the course is completed, then the repeated course grade will be governed by the General Repeat Policy outlined in the "Academic Policies and Regulations" section of this catalog.

Postbaccalaureate students pursuing a second bachelor's degree, a second major, a credential, or a minor are subject to the undergraduate repeat policy but must file the postbaccalaureate petition in the Graduate School.

Master's Degree Program Time Limit
You must complete all requirements for a master's degree no later than five or seven years from the end of the semester of enrollment in the oldest course on the approved program. Consult the academic program chapter for your discipline elsewhere in this catalog to determine the time limit applicable to your program.

In special circumstances, an extension of the program time limit may be granted to a maximum of no more than two additional years. The extension may require taking additional course work and dropping expired courses from the approved program, or validating expired course work (see "Validation of Expired Course Work"). The approval for the extension and the duration of the extension are determined by the petitioner's graduate advisory committee, the departmental graduate coordinator, and the Graduate School, in that order.

Specifications for Master's Theses and Projects
Preparation of master's theses and projects is governed by guidelines established by the Graduate Council. You should obtain a copy of these guidelines, A Guide to Graduate Studies: Policies, Procedures, & Format, from the Graduate School before you begin work on the thesis or project. Questions concerning thesis or project specifications should be directed to the thesis editor. Failure to follow the prescribed regulations may delay your graduation.

Human and Animal Subjects in Research
Research involving human or animal subjects is governed by policies of the Human Subjects in Research Committee and the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee. Proposals for research using human or animal subjects must be reviewed and approved by the applicable committee before the study begins. Guidelines on the use of human or animal subjects are available from the Graduate School.

Transfer and Open University Credit
A maximum of 9 semester units of postbaccalaureate transfer and/or Open University coursework may be included in a master's degree program, provided that the courses have not been counted toward any previous degree. Transfer coursework may be considered for inclusion in your program at CSU, Chico if the school granting the credit is regionally accredited and would accept the work for graduate credit toward its own advanced degree programs. If you have transfer or Open University credit that you would like to use as part of your approved master's degree program, you should discuss it with both your graduate coordinator and an evaluator in the Graduate School at the time that you develop your program. Any transfer or Open University credit used to meet master's degree requirements is subject to the program time limit. (Note: Neither University of California extension course work nor correspondence course work of any kind may be applied toward a master's degree.)

The transfer credit limit for the terminal MFA degree is different than the general requirement stated above. In addition, a certain amount of course work counted towards a previous graduate degree may also be counted towards MFA program requirements. Please review the MFA program description elsewhere in this catalog for specific information.

Validation of Expired Course Work
In conjunction with an approved extension of the time limit for completing a master's degree, expired courses may be validated by registration, examination, or other appropriate means. Expired courses are those taken five years or more prior to the date of graduating with the master's degree, or seven years or more prior to that date for those programs under a seven-year time limit. A request for an extension and permission to validate credit must be approved by your graduate advisory committee, your graduate coordinator, and the Graduate School (in that order) before you begin validation. Validation by registration requires you to enroll in the expired courses as an auditor and complete all assigned work. The instructor of each course will notify the Graduate School of your satisfactory completion of course requirements. Validation by examination requires the successful completion of a written examination or report covering the essential materials of the course. The instructor will file in the Graduate School the final report or examination together with a written statement that it satisfactorily demonstrates current knowledge of course content. The report or examination will be kept on record until you receive the master's degree.