Graduate Education

REGULATIONS GOVERNING GRADUATE STUDENTS

In addition to reviewing policies and definitions included in this section, you may also wish to consult the “Academic Policies and Regulations” section of The University Catalog for information concerning general university policies and additional information on academic probation and disqualification. The Office of Graduate Programs also offers a publication, A Guide to Graduate Studies: Policies, Procedures, & Format, which provides 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 requirements for the degree. Following is an overview of policies applicable to master’s degree, credential, and unclassified students (i.e., students with objectives other than a master’s degree or credential) as set forth by the Office of Graduate Programs. For information on specific departmental requirements, 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 requirements that are in effect at the time of your admission to conditionally classified status for that degree. If you are making normal progress toward 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 and do not fail any courses toward the degree. You may not complete additional 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 regulations in effect at the time of readmission.

Student Responsibility

The university staff and faculty, particularly those in the Office of Graduate Programs, 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 Office of Graduate Programs or your department. Prior to acceptance into the Master’s Degree Program Plan in consultation with your graduate coordinator and graduate advisory committee and submitting it to the Office of Graduate Programs during your first semester will help significantly in ensuring that you meet university requirements in a timely manner. Should you have questions on policies or procedures at any point in your program, your major department and the Office of Graduate Programs are available to help you.

Graduate Coordinators

Each graduate program has a designated graduate coordinator who is responsible for reviewing applications and students in developing programs of study, endorsing study lists, maintaining records of all students enrolled in the program, and supplying information required 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 departmental and Office of Graduate Programs 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 the normal application process in the Office of Graduate Programs. Admission to a second program does not assure admission to another program. If you wish to change your objective, you must file an application for admission to the new degree program and meet all requirements in effect at the time of admission to the desired program.

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 toward a master’s degree that has been counted toward another master’s degree program; failure to remove the deficiency within one semester will result in disqualification from the master’s program.

If your major department finds that you do not satisfy established criteria in the discipline, you will be terminated in that discipline upon receipt of a letter from the graduate coordinator requesting such termination. The termination request from the department may be accompanied by a recommendation that you be admitted as an unclassified student, in which case the Graduate Dean may make such an admission for one semester to allow you to apply for admission to another program.

All Postbaccalaureate Students

You will be placed on academic probation if either your cumulative grade point average (which includes all transferred work) or your Chico grade point average falls below 2.0 for all courses taken beyond the baccalaureate. You will be removed from academic probation and restored to good standing when you earn a cumulative and Chico grade point average of 2.0 or higher in all work attempted.

Postbaccalaureate students are governed by the policy on Academic Disqualification outlined in the “Academic Policies and Regulations” section of this catalog. If you are disqualified, you will be notified by letter as soon as possible after the end of the spring semester. If you are subject to disqualification at the end of the fall semester, you will be notified of the impending action as early as possible after the end of the fall semester but will be allowed to continue through the spring semester. If, by the end of the spring semester, you are unable to raise your grade point average to within less than six grade points of 2.0, you will be disqualified.
Graduate Credit for Excess Units

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 toward 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 200/300-level courses for graduate credit. Your total enrollment in units required for the baccalaureate and units taken for graduate credit may not exceed 15.
4. Submit a petition within the first month of your final undergraduate semester. Include the supplementary attachment to confirm that you will be held for graduate requirements in each 200-level course listed.

You may initiate the petition process in the Office of Graduate Programs. After you have been cleared for the baccalaureate your petition will be reviewed to determine:

1) That the requested units are in excess of the baccalaureate and
2) 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 and will be counted as postbaccalaureate units in computing the grade point average for admission to a master’s program. However, inclusion of the units in a master’s degree program is subject to approval by the individual graduate advisory committee. For information on the possibility of using units which are in excess of a baccalaureate earned at another institution, you should inquire at the Office of Graduate Programs.

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 toward 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 200 or 300 level are applied toward a master’s degree program. Courses numbered 200-298 are acceptable as credit toward a master’s degree unless otherwise noted in the course description. Graduate students enrolled in 200-level courses will be held to more rigorous requirements than undergraduates and must earn a grade of C- or better to count them toward their program. Courses numbered 200-298 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 sixty percent of the total units required for a master’s degree program must be in stand-alone 300-level courses (those not cross-listed with 200-level courses).

Any course to be counted toward a master’s degree program must be acceptable for graduate credit by the discipline offering the course (i.e., a 200/300-level course that is not acceptable for its department’s master’s degree program would not be counted toward a master’s degree in another discipline).

Independent Study (398) and Master’s Study (399)

No more than a combined total of 10 units of Independent Study (398) and Master’s Study (399) may be included in a master’s degree program. A maximum of 6 units of Master’s Study (399) is allowed.

Independent Study (398), open to any postbaccalaureate student, is a course designated for a specific research project supervised by any authorized member of the faculty. Independent Study 299 may not be counted toward a master’s degree. Master’s Study (399) is separated into a thesis and supporting research (offered as 399A-F for 1.0 to 6.0 units respectively) or a project as defined by the individual department offered as 399G-I for 1.0 to 6.0 units respectively. In programs, course descriptions, and policy discussions, the 399 is usually referred to as a thesis or a project. Without the suffix of thesis or project, enrollments in 399 courses are supervised by the chair of the student’s graduate advisory committee and may not be taken through Extension, Continuing Education, or Open University. Credit for an Independent Study (398) is controlled by the academic discipline offering the course. The faculty member directing the study assigns either a letter grade or a CR/NC grade. The completion of the thesis or other terminal project and the supporting research for the topic will receive 1-6 units of Master’s Study credit, and enrollment in 399 is required.

Normally, enrollment in 399 is limited to classified students and candidates in a master’s degree program, although restrictions vary among departments. The units allowable are controlled by the academic department granting the degree. However, in no case may a student enroll in, or receive credit for, more units of 399 work than are required for the student’s individual program. The Office of Graduate Programs assigns all grades for 399 enrollments. An IP (in progress) grade, rather than an I (incomplete), is assigned until the student has completed all work for the degree; a CR (credit) grade is assigned upon successful completion of all requirements for the master’s degree.

You may receive either an IP (in progress) or an I (incomplete) for a 398 course that is not completed in the semester of enrollment. You must complete course requirements and have the IP or I replaced with either a letter grade or a CR within one year of the date of the original grade assignment. An IP assigned to a 399 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 from the end of the semester of enrollment in the oldest course on the approved master’s degree program). Failure to complete the work required for the grade change within the specified time period will result in the IP being converted to NC or F for 398 courses, and NC for 399 courses.

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 Office of Graduate Programs. You must apply for graduation and complete the culminating activity for your master’s degree program by the deadlines for your final semester 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-semester problems and graduation delays.

A Commencement ceremony for master’s graduates is held on a weekend during each spring semester. You are eligible to participate in the ceremony if you graduated at the end of the previous summer semester 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. 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.

Definition of a Full-Time Graduate Student

Except as noted below, full-time graduate students are those who are admitted to a master’s degree program and have at least 8 semester units of graduate-level (200/300/level) course work. Students enrolled in course work at both the graduate-level (numbered 200 or above) and undergraduate-level (numbered below 200), but with fewer than 8 units of graduate-level course work, must be enrolled in a total of 12 units to be considered full time. In addition, for students with appointments as graduate assistants, teaching associates, or part-time faculty, half-time (20 hours/wk) employment may be regarded as the equivalent of 4 semester units of graduate course work in determining full-time status. Appointment for fewer than 20 hours/work are pro-rated in determining full-time status.

Note: For purposes of financial aid eligibility, students may not be allowed to count employment toward the full-time status; please consult a financial aid counselor.
Library Privileges for Graduate Students

The following privileges are granted to graduate students:

1. The loan period for graduate students is five weeks (35 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 Office of Graduate Programs. 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. If you are pursuing a second baccalaureate, you will be governed by the same regulations 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 post-baccalaureate course with forgiveness of the original grade, you must file a petition in the Office of Graduate Programs. 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 Chico.
7. You must be enrolled in the class.

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 Office of Graduate Programs.

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 Office of Graduate Programs, 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 Coordinators Committee. You should obtain a copy of these guidelines, A Guide to Graduate Studies: Policies, Procedures, & Format, from the Office of Graduate Programs 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

Any 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 all research using human or animal subjects must be reviewed by the applicable committee before the study begins to determine that it is either exempt from the need for review, or that it complies with policy. Guidelines on the use of human or animal subjects are available from the Office of Graduate Programs.

Transfer and Extension Credit

A maximum of 9 semester units of transfer and/or extension course work is acceptable toward meeting master’s degree requirements, provided that the courses have not been counted toward any previous degree. CSU, Chico Extension and Open University course work are counted in this maximum. Master’s Study (399) may not be taken through Extension, Special Session, or Open University. Any transfer or extension credit used to meet master’s degree requirements is subject to the program time limit. The transfer credit limits for the terminal MFA degrees are different than the general requirement stated above. In addition, a certain amount of course work counted toward a previous graduate degree may also be counted toward MFA program requirements. Please review the individual MFA program descriptions elsewhere in this catalog for specific information.

If the institution granting the credit you wish to transfer is regionally accredited and would accept the work for graduate credit toward its degree programs, the Office of Graduate Programs and your department may do the same. If you have transfer or extension credit that you would like to use as part of your approved master’s degree program, you should discuss it with your graduate advisor and an Office of Graduate Programs evaluator at the time you are developing your program. (Note: Neither University of California extension course work nor correspondence course work of any kind may be applied toward a master’s degree.)

Validation of Expired Course Work

In conjunction with an approved extension of the time limit for completing a master’s degree, expired course work must 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 advisor and/or extension course work is acceptable toward any previous degree. CSU, Chico Extension and Open University course work are counted in this maximum. Master’s Study (399) may not be taken through Extension, Special Session, or Open University. Any transfer or extension credit used to meet master’s degree requirements is subject to the program time limit. The transfer credit limits for the terminal MFA degrees are different than the general requirement stated above. In addition, a certain amount of course work counted toward a previous graduate degree may also be counted toward MFA program requirements. Please review the individual MFA program descriptions elsewhere in this catalog for specific information.

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