

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 400–498 and 500–598 are acceptable as credit towards a master's degree unless otherwise noted in the course description. Courses numbered 499 and 599 are not acceptable. 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 (697), Comprehensive Examination (696), and Master's Study (699)

No more than a combined total of 10 units of Independent Study (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 (697), open to any postbaccalaureate student, is a course designated for a specific research project supervised by any authorized member of the faculty. Credit for an Independent Study (697) is controlled by the academic discipline 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 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 when 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 699 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 for the topic. 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 from the end of the semester of enrollment in the oldest course on the approved master's degree program). 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.

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 once a year at the end of the spring semester. You are eligible to participate in the ceremony if you graduated at the end 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 program 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 (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 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. However, you may petition and be approved to repeat a postbaccalaureate course with forgiveness of the original grade under the stipulations of the Repeat with Forgiveness policies that apply to graduate and postbaccalaureate students. Please refer to "Repeating Courses" in the Academic Policies and Regulations section of this catalog for these policies.

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 CSU, Chico 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 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 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.