



CALIFORNIA STATE POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY, POMONA  
POLICY NO: 1120

DEFINITIONS AND GUIDELINES FOR MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAMS  
STRUCTURE FOR SEMESTER MODEL

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1. General Structure

All Master's degrees shall be a minimum of 30-semester units<sup>1</sup> of approved graduate work completed within a maximum of seven years<sup>2</sup>, with the restrictions that:

- a. At least 70% of the units shall be completed in residence.<sup>3</sup>
- b. 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). 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.<sup>4</sup>
- c. Programs shall contain a core, a collection of specified courses\*\* that all students in the program complete for the degree. The purpose of the core curriculum is to ensure that there are sufficient opportunities for students to achieve the program's learning outcomes. The core courses shall comprise the majority of the units in the degree program.

\*\*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 exactly 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.

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1 Title 5 40510

2 Title 5 40510

3 Title 5 40510 requires that 21 semester units shall be completed in residence, This is 70% of 30 unit program. This document proposes that this percentage be applied to all master's programs.

4 Title 5 40510 requires that 50% of the units required for the degree shall be in "courses organized primarily for graduate students." This document propose that this percentage be increased to 70%, and applies a definition for such courses that is currently being considered by the Chancellor's Office.



- d. 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, but they cannot be used to satisfy core requirements.<sup>5</sup>
- e. No more than 6 units may be designated for the culminating experience.<sup>6</sup> In case a student enrolls in excess culminating experience units these cannot be used for credit in core nor elective coursework.

## 2. Options and Emphases<sup>7</sup>

- a. An option is a broad set of knowledge at an advanced level based on the knowledge gained in a specific graduate degree. Options shall be tracked in PeopleSoft and shall appear on transcripts and diplomas.
- b. An emphasis is a specific body of knowledge supported by a core of courses at the graduate level. Emphases shall not be formally declared, shall not be tracked in PeopleSoft, and shall not appear on transcripts or diplomas.

## 3. Culminating Experiences

### a. 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.

### b. 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.<sup>8</sup>

### c. 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,

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<sup>5</sup> Currently, 3000 level courses are accepted in all colleges except Business and Engineering. However, the catalog states that 3000 level classes bear graduate degree credit upon the approval of the advisor, while 4000 level courses bear advanced undergraduate or graduate students. The proposal is consistent with this..

<sup>6</sup> Title 5 40510

<sup>7</sup> These rules for emphases and options are consistent with those for options and emphases at the undergraduate level,

<sup>8</sup> EO 665 requires demonstration of writing proficiency before graduation. The catalog requires that this demonstration occur before advancement to candidacy.



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.<sup>9</sup>

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 through a faculty initiated Report of Culminating Experience.

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

d. 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.<sup>10</sup>

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.

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<sup>9</sup> Title 5 40510

<sup>10</sup> Title 5 40510



- 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.

The composition, procedures, and other policies governing Master's project committees shall be described in a separate referral to the Academic Senate.

e. 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. <sup>12</sup>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.

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<sup>11</sup> This replaces the policy on Graduate Comprehensive Exams (AS-851-923) previously approved by the Academic Senate in 1993.  
<sup>12</sup> Title 5 40510



- 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.

#### 4. Recertification

An extension of the time beyond the limit of seven years may be granted by the Associate Vice President for Academic Programs 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.<sup>13</sup> The plan for validation of outdated coursework must be negotiated in consultation with the graduate coordinator and approved by the College Dean and the Associate Vice President for Academic Programs. Documentation of the approved plan must be placed in the student's permanent file. 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.

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<sup>13</sup> Borrowed with slight modification from Title 5 40510

