

AP-008-145, Proposed Master's Degree Structure Under
the Semester Calendar
Academic Senate Minutes 5-27-15 – Attachment 6

Structure of Master's Degree Programs in the Semester Calendar

1. General Structure

All graduate degrees shall be a minimum of 30 semester unitsⁱ of approved graduate work completed within a maximum of seven yearsⁱⁱ, with the restrictions that:

- a. At least 70% of the units shall be completed in residenceⁱⁱⁱ;
- b. At least 70% 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);^{iv}
- c. All courses shall be at the 400 level or higher. ^v
- d. No more than 6 units may be designated for the culminating experience.^{vi}

2. Options and Emphases^{vii}

- a. 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.
- b. 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.
- c. Programs with no options (but possibly emphases) shall contain a core, a collection of specified courses that all students in the program complete for the degree, exclusive of the culminating experience. The number of units in the core shall be defined by the offering department/college.
- d. Programs that have options shall not be required to have a core common to all options. Each of the options shall contain a core that all students in the option complete for the degree. The number of units in the core shall be defined by the offering department/college.

3. Culminating Experiences

a. Selection 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.

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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.^{viii}

c. Theses

The written product of a systematic study of a significant problem that defines a 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 project [product] evidences originality, critical and independent thinking, appropriate organization and format, and thorough documentation.^{ix}

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.

d. Guidelines for Master's Thesis Committees^x

The master's thesis committee provides guidance to students in the planning and execution of the thesis. The committee should be comprised of individuals with expertise directly related to the thesis research.

(1) Composition of Committee

- i. The thesis committee shall be comprised of three faculty members.
- ii. The thesis committee chair must hold a full-time permanent (tenured or tenure track) faculty appointment in the department in which the student's degree is offered.

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- iii. A second committee member must have a full-time permanent faculty appointment at Cal Poly Pomona. It is recommended, but not required, that the second member have a full-time permanent faculty appointment in the department in which the student's degree is offered.
 - iv. It is recommended but not required that the third member of the thesis committee be from outside the department.
 - v. FERP and Emeritus faculty may serve as the second or third committee member.
 - vi. Lecturers may serve as the second (if full time) or third committee member.
 - vii. Off-campus individuals may serve as the third committee member.
 - viii. Changes to the composition of the thesis committee can be made via petition and approval by the Graduate Director/Coordinator.
- (2) Qualifications of Committee Members
- i. The thesis committee chair shall have specific expertise (theoretical, methodological, or topical) in the area of the proposed thesis.
 - ii. The thesis committee chair and a second committee member must hold a terminal degree or the equivalent in an appropriate discipline and be current in the field, as determined by the department.
 - iii. The third committee member must hold, at a minimum, a master's degree or equivalent in an appropriate discipline and be current in the field, as determined by the department.
 - iv. At least one member of the committee should regularly teach graduate level courses.
- (3) Responsibilities of Committee Chair^{xi}
- i. Advise the student in the selection of other members for the thesis committee, ensuring that the other members are appropriate to the proposed thesis effort.
 - ii. Be the major contact point with the student and shall oversee the other committee members' work with the student.
 - iii. Assure that the editorial and format standards appropriate to the mechanical preparation of a thesis are followed.
 - iv. Establish guidelines for the student and timetables to be followed to ensure completion of the thesis in a reasonable time.
 - v. Arrange for the oral defense of the thesis.
 - vi. Canvass the committee and reporting the grade agreed upon by its members.

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(4) Terms of Service

- i. All members of the committee shall sign an Agreement to Serve as a Member of a Master's Thesis Committee. A signature on this agreement signifies full participation through the completion of the process, which may span two or more years.
- ii. It is the responsibility of both the student and the committee member to ensure that the committee member will be available throughout the process.
- iii. If a faculty member resigns from the committee for any reason, the committee must be reconstituted to ensure that all guidelines are met. The graduate coordinator (or the department chair if the graduate coordinator is a member of the thesis committee) may require the reconstitution of a committee.

(5) Other

- i. Departments may institute guidelines concerning faculty eligibility and selection beyond those included here.
- ii. Students and their department graduate advisor are responsible for complying with all guidelines.
- iii. Requests to deviate from these guidelines must be submitted to the Associate Vice President for Academic Programs for approval.

e. Projects

A significant undertaking that a program outlines as appropriate to that discipline. 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.^{XII}

Culminating projects must demonstrate originality and critical thinking, and reflect the scholarly or artistic capability of the candidate. The Project Committee will be most concerned with the manner in which the material is researched, organized, developed, and presented. Types of projects include:

- 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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- A Rhetoric and Composition Portfolio Project: A collection of new and re-envisioned work including elements of revision, reflection, analysis, and application of theoretical concepts and practical strategies. This culminating project evidences significant growth in understanding and mastery of essential concepts and provides ample demonstration of the candidate's analytical, scholarly, and creative abilities.

A project must evidence originality and independent thinking, appropriate form, and organization. It must be described in a written document that summarizes the project's significance, objectives, methodology, and includes a conclusion or recommendation. This document 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. An oral defense of a project shall include a presentation by the master's candidate to faculty capable of assessing the quality of the student's work, and/or a period of questioning directed to the master's candidate by said group of faculty

f. Comprehensive Exams^{xiii}

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.^{xiv} 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.

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- 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.^{xvi} Under no circumstances will the time limit be extended beyond 9 years. A maximum of nine (9) units may be recertified.^{xvii} Only Cal Poly Pomona coursework is eligible for recertification.

ⁱ Title 5 40510

ⁱⁱ Title 5 40510

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

^{iv} 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.

^v Currently, 300 level courses are accepted in all colleges except Business and Engineering. However, the catalog states that 300 level classes bear graduate degree credit upon the approval of the advisor, while 400 level courses bear advanced undergraduate or graduate students. The proposal is consistent with this.

^{vi} Title 5 40510

^{vii} The use of emphases and options is consistent with the use of the concentrations at the undergraduate level.

^{viii} EO 665 requires demonstration of writing proficiency before graduation. The catalog requires that this demonstration occur before advancement to candidacy.

^{ix} Title 5 40510

^x These guidelines are currently under consideration in the Academic Senate, AA-003-112.

^{xi} This section is not in the guidelines currently under consideration

^{xii} Title 5 40510

^{xiii} This replaces the policy on Graduate Comprehensive Exams (AS-851-923) previously approved by the Academic Senate in 1993.

^{xiv} Title 5 40510

^{xv} There are many questions about how to ensure the quality of such products. The Graduate Council will continue to investigate the inclusion of such products, but they are not included in this referral.

^{xvi} Title 5 40510

^{xvii} Science and Business currently allow 12 quarter units within nine years. Agriculture allows 18 quarter units within 10 years.