

CALIFORNIA STATE POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY, POMONA
ACADEMIC SENATE

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS COMMITTEE

REPORT TO
THE ACADEMIC SENATE

AP-008-145

Proposed Master's Degree Structure under Semester Calendar

Academic Programs Committee

Date:

Executive Committee
Received and Forwarded

Date: May 20, 2015

Academic Senate

Date: May 27, 2015
First Reading
October 21, 2015
Second Reading

BACKGROUND:

Attached is a proposal for the master's degree under the Semester Calendar. The proposal generally follows current and proposed Title 5 policy, as well as current Cal Poly Pomona (CPP) policy and practice. It also follows the distinction between emphases and options set forth in the parallel undergraduate degree proposal (AS-2465-145/AP). The proposal requests to supersede a policy passed in 1993 concerning comprehensive exams (AS-851-923/AP). The proposal has been extensively footnoted to explain the source/reason for each of its elements.

RESOURCES CONSULTED:

Deans
Associate Deans
Department Chairs
Graduate Coordinators
Associate Provost Claudia Pinter-Lucke
Graduate Council

DISCUSSION:

The Academic Programs Committee consulted widely across campus and the majority of faculty responses to the proposed **Master's Degree Structure under Semester Calendar** were in general agreement with the document as originally submitted. The committee also compared this referral to a separate referral on the composition of a master's thesis committee (AS-2468-145/AA), and decided that the Senate should not revisit the matter just a few months later in this referral.

Feedback from faculty included 1) the suggestion that if a project does not require a defense, then a thesis should not either; 2) the observation that for comprehensive exams, small departments could have a difficult time supplying a minimum of two faculty to evaluate the exam's quality and adequacy and evaluate the student's responses; 3) the suggestion that the definition of a **Project** as a culminating experience be expanded.

The Academic Programs Committee has expanded the definition of a **Project** by offering the broad definition from Title 5, and then following with a few examples significant to many of the graduate programs on our campus. In particular, in consultation with the English & Foreign Languages Department, the Committee has listed an example under Project entitled 'A Portfolio Project', as this is a common genre of scholarly and professional work in fields such as rhetoric and composition.

Additionally, the Academic Programs Committee has received varying input on the proper size of a program core, with some disciplines having greater variety of

coursework than others. The Committee recommends a program core of at least 5 units, to ensure some sort of coherence while respecting the widely varying needs of different disciplines. Different disciplines will have different ways of constructing their 5 unit core; as one reasonable example (but NOT as a policy prescription) the Academic Programs Committee notes that the core could consist of a 3-unit foundational course covering topics relevant to all sub-disciplines emphasized in the program, and participation in a 2-semester weekly departmental seminar series that emphasizes the breadth and depth of the discipline. Other core structures are certainly possible and amply justifiable.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Academic Programs Committee recommends approval of AP-008-145 Proposed Master's Degree Structure under Semester Calendar.

Structure of Master's Degree Programs in the Semester Calendar

1. General Structure

All Master's degrees shall be a minimum of 30 semester units¹ of approved graduate work completed within a maximum of seven years², with the restrictions that:

- a. At least 70% of the units shall be completed in residence.³
- 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.⁴
- c. Programs 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 purpose of the core curriculum is to ensure that there are sufficient opportunities for students to achieve the program's learning outcomes. The number of units in the core shall be at least 5. It is expected that the core will contain 6 units or more in order to achieve

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 a 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.

this purpose; a minimum of 5 units in the core is required.

- 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.⁵
- e. No more than 6 units may be designated for the culminating experience.⁶

2. Options and Emphases⁷

- 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.⁸

⁵ 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.

⁶ Title 5 40510

⁷ These rules for emphases and options are consistent with those for options and emphases at the undergraduate level.

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

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, 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.⁹

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.

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.¹⁰

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.

⁹ Title 5 40510

¹⁰ Title 5 40510

- 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.
- 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 Exams¹¹

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.¹² 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:

¹¹ This replaces the policy on Graduate Comprehensive Exams (AS-851-923) previously approved by the Academic Senate in 1993.

¹²Title 5 40510

- 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.
- 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.¹³ Under no circumstances will the time limit be extended beyond 9 years. A maximum of nine (9) units may be recertified.¹⁴ Only Cal Poly Pomona coursework is eligible for recertification.

¹³ Borrowed with slight modification from Title 5 40510

¹⁴ Science and Business currently allow 12 quarter units within nine years. Agriculture currently allows 18 quarter units within 10 years.