

GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK

Policies and Guidelines

AY 2025-2026



CAL POLY
Graduate Education

grad.calpoly.edu

CALIFORNIA POLYTECHNIC STATE UNIVERSITY SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA

GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK

Policies & Guidelines for Graduate Programs

AY 2025-2026

GRADUATE EDUCATION OFFICE

Bldg. 52 - D27

805-756-2328

EMAIL: grad@calpoly.edu

WEBSITE: grad.calpoly.edu

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MISSION STATEMENT

GRADUATE EDUCATION OFFICE

We support students to achieve excellence in both practice-oriented and research-based professional graduate programs that develop the advanced knowledge and leadership skills necessary to contribute to and prosper in an increasingly competitive global context. We work to inspire students to innovate and excel in their educational and professional career objectives.



WELCOME TO CAL POLY.

We hope your time with us will challenge you to grow professionally and enrich your life personally. We look forward to supporting you in this process and hope this handbook will provide answers to your questions.

INTRODUCTION

The California Polytechnic State University at San Luis Obispo, CA has more than 35 graduate programs. These programs offer Master's degrees, Post-baccalaureate Credentials (Education), and Graduate and Professional Certificates. For more information about Cal Poly's Graduate Education programs, please visit [Graduate Education](#) or contact us at grad@calpoly.edu.

This handbook is intended to help guide graduate students through the many policies and processes that must be followed to successfully complete graduate work at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo. It contains many of the official rules and regulations that govern the Cal Poly campus; a complete set of regulations can be found in the University Catalog. This handbook should serve to answer many of the questions that students encounter as they map out a pathway to degree completion.

Keep in mind that students themselves are ultimately responsible for the successful completion of all of the steps and documents required for graduation. This includes submitting all forms in a timely manner and adhering to university, college, and department requirements related to their degree program. This also means maintaining [Continuous Enrollment](#) until the completion of their degree. This handbook will assist students in achieving these goals and successfully completing their plan of study in a timely fashion.

Please contact Graduate Education at grad@calpoly.edu with any recommendations for additions or corrections to this handbook.

GRADUATE PROGRAM ADVISING

Each graduate program has a designated Graduate Coordinator who advises and assists students in developing their course of study and can help students navigate the detailed steps required to complete their program. A list of current Graduate Programs and designated Graduate Coordinators can be found at [Graduate Education](#).

Departmental faculty advisors and Graduate Coordinators share the responsibility for advising Master's degree students throughout their graduate career. Students are urged to maintain a personal file of transcripts and other records of all undergraduate and graduate work undertaken and to make this file available whenever they seek advising.

For general questions regarding Graduate Education, students can contact the Graduate Education office at grad@calpoly.edu or (805) 756-2328. The Graduate Education office is located in Building 52, Room D27A an open Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. We recommend reaching out via email as a first step and regularly checking our website for updates.

REGISTRATION AND TUITION

Registration for classes is completed through a student's Cal Poly Portal, and the process depends on if the student's program is classified as **state-support or self-support**. The following programs are self-support: MS Fire Protection Engineering, MS Business Analytics and MS Economics. Additionally, all graduate and professional certificate programs are self-support. All other programs are state-support.

STATE-SUPPORT PROGRAMS

For State-Support programs, enrollment schedules for each term are listed at [Office of the Registrar](#). The schedule and instructions for registration and payment of fees are available through the registration and enrollment tab at the MyCalPoly web portal.

State-support programs pay tuition based on a CA state subsidized model. There is a fixed tuition for taking 6 units or less and a set tuition for

students taking more than 6 units. A full-time graduate student is defined as one taking 8 or more units in a term. Students receiving financial aid may need to meet different requirements to be considered full-time and should consult with the Financial Aid Office. Normally, graduate students are not permitted to enroll in more than 22 units each term.

SELF-SUPPORT PROGRAMS

For Self-Support programs, registration timelines are different and occur through Extended Education. Information on the process for registration via Extended Education including paying fees can be found at [Extended Education](#).

Self-support programs do not receive any CA subsidization, and tuition is based on the number of units taken for the program as well as the costs of delivery. Self-support programs have a business model that requires a certain number of students in order for the program to be financially viable.

Please visit [Financial Aid](#) for both state-support and self-support programs.

REGISTRATION AND FULL-TIME STATUS

For graduate students, full-time status is 8 units per term. However, graduate students may enroll in up to 16 units during their Cal Poly registration rotation period and up to 22 units (maximum) per term during open registration. Additionally, some financial aid awards and sponsored projects may require enrollment in a different number of units. Please check with the Financial Aid Office.

ENROLLMENT IN GRADUATE COURSE

To enroll in a 500-level graduate course, a student must have post-baccalaureate standing, graduate standing, or the permission of the instructor. Undergraduate prerequisites are waived for 500-level courses. Please note that prerequisites are not waived for 400-level courses; the student may need to obtain a permission number from the Instructor or department administrator to enroll in 400-level courses.

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

The [Cal Poly Catalog](#) is the official source for all degree requirements and policies that govern your degree progress and requirements. You should familiarize yourself with the catalog. The following are some of the conditions and academic requirements that are common to all Master's degrees:

- All graduate students must submit an approved **Working Formal Study Plan & Advancement to Candidacy Form** to the Graduate Education office with a minimum of **45 term units** (Title 5, Article 7, 40510 b.2.) before the end of the first term of enrollment. This form also documents that the student has completed their Advancement to Candidacy requirements.
- All graduate students must maintain an overall **grade point average of 3.0** (grade of B on a scale where A = 4.0) or better in all degree applicable courses. A course in which a 'CR' is assigned shall not be used in computing the grade point average. (Title 5, Article 7, 40510 b.4.) Only individual graded courses with C- (1.7) or higher can be counted towards your degree.
- All graduate students must maintain **satisfactory scholarship and professional standards**. Only those graduate students who continue to demonstrate a satisfactory level of scholastic competence and fitness, as determined by the appropriate university authorities, shall be eligible to continue in their graduate studies. Students whose performance is judged to be unsatisfactory by the authorities of the University may be required to withdraw from all graduate degree curricula offered by the University.

All graduate students must successfully complete a **culminating experience** (thesis, project, and/or comprehensive examination) (Title 5, Article 7, 40510 b.3.). Requirements for a graduate program's culminating experience are detailed in the [Cal Poly Catalog](#).

All graduate students must complete all degree requirements **within seven years** (Title 5, Article 7, 40510 b.2.) of first matriculation into that program. Even if a student is admitted conditionally into a Master's degree-seeking program, their matriculation date serves as the beginning of their seven-year period.

All graduate students may elect to meet the Cal Poly Catalog graduation requirements in effect at the time the student was admitted to graduate standing (conditional or classified), provided that [Continuous Enrollment](#) was maintained (AS-692-09). Student may also choose to follow the degree requirements detailed in the current Catalog. Please contact the [Office of the Registrar](#) for more details.

- Graduate students may be required to make **substitutions on their Formal Study Plan** for discontinued courses. All substitutions

must be approved.

- Graduate level courses (**500-level**) **must make up no fewer than 60%** of the units required for the degree (AS-825-17). Students who matriculated into their graduate program prior to Fall 2019 are responsible for ensuring that graduate level courses (500-level) make up no fewer than 50% of the units required for their degree. Students who elect to return to Cal Poly after discontinuation in their program will be held to the catalog requirements of their first term of matriculation. However, the returning student can choose to follow the degree requirements detailed in the current Catalog.
- No more than **9 units of student teaching** can be applied to a student's Formal Study Plan.
- No more than 9 units shall be allowed for a **thesis and/or project** (Title 5, Article 7, b.2.C.) culminating experience.
- Beginning Fall 2019, thesis/project/exam courses must be completed while matriculated in a degree-seeking program and cannot be completed through [Open University](#) or GS 597. Students who matriculated into their Master's degree programs prior to Fall 2019 may elect to complete Master's Project or Master's Exam coursework through Open University. Master's Thesis coursework may not be completed through Open University regardless of matriculation date.
- Some programs/departments set limits on the number of units allowed in independent study courses. Typically, there is a 12-unit combined (400/500) maximum of independent study units allowed towards a Master's degree.
- A credential or certificate student may not change their degree objective to a Master's program using a Postbaccalaureate Change of Objective form. They must apply to the Master's program through [Cal State Apply](#).
- All graduate students must be enrolled during the term they complete their degree requirements, including the culminating experience and the completion of any work to replace an incomplete or report in progress grade, regardless of the course or course-level.
- A degree cannot be posted until the last day of the term in which a student completes all degree requirements. Note that grade change paperwork **MUST** accurately reflect the date that all work was completed. Grade change paperwork will determine the term to which a degree can be posted.

Additional policies and requirements, including details on in-residence/out-of-residence requirements, matriculated/pre-matriculated coursework, and others can be found at [Cal Poly Catalog](#). It is the student's responsibility to be familiar with how these policies and requirements may impact progress toward and completion of the program.



ACADEMIC POLICIES

All of the requirements and academic responsibilities that apply to graduate students can be found in this section. Graduate students are ultimately responsible for ensuring that they are following these policies.

CONTINUOUS ENROLLMENT

Graduate students are required to maintain [Continuous Enrollment](#) from the time of first enrollment in a graduate program until completion of the degree (AS-692-09). Continuous Enrollment is defined as being enrolled during Fall, Winter, and Spring terms each year. Additionally, all graduate students must be enrolled for the term in which they graduate. Therefore, a student graduating Summer term must be enrolled during the Summer. Students can maintain Continuous Enrollment by enrolling in regular required coursework; obtaining approval for an Educational or Medical Leave of Absence prior to the term when such a leave would begin; or registering in a special course designated for this purpose during terms in which they are not regularly enrolled. This special course, GS 597, is listed in the University catalog and is taken through Cal Poly Extended Education. GS 597 is a one-unit course, offered credit/no credit. Credits in GS 597 do not count toward meeting degree requirements.

Students who fail to fulfill the [Continuous Enrollment](#) requirement will not be permitted to graduate—even if all degree requirements have been completed—until payment has been made for all terms of non-enrollment. This requirement is not retroactive to terms prior to Fall 2009.



There is no maximum (or cap) on the number of terms that students will be responsible for maintaining continuous enrollment. Enrolling in one unit of GS 597 each term entitles students to use of the library, access to their Cal Poly portal, use of their Cal Poly email account, and access to their thesis advisor and committee members.

For further information and the continuous enrollment Registration Form, visit [Continuous Enrollment](#).

TIME LIMIT FOR DEGREE COMPLETION (THE 7-YEAR RULE)

The time allowed to successfully complete all Master's requirements, including the Master's culminating experience, is 7 years (Title 5, Article 7, 40510 b.2.) from the time the student is matriculated (classified or conditionally classified) into their Master's degree program.

The University, at its option and in exceptional cases, may extend the 7-year time frame. Students who wish to extend the 7-year limit must submit a Petition for Special Consideration form to Graduate Education. The petition must include:

- An explanation of the reasons why the extension is necessary.
- Evidence to support the student's currency in the field of study.
- A copy of the student's Formal Study Plan that indicates any additional coursework that needs to be completed as part of the petition and which of those courses will be over seven years old at the proposed time of completion.
 - If the extension is necessary for completion of the culminating experience, list the specific experience being used (thesis, project, or comprehensive exam).
 - Indicate the current progress made on the culminating experience and when completion of final degree requirements is expected.

The seven-year rule cannot be extended indefinitely; the student must specify in the petition what term and year they will be completing all degree requirements, thus indicating precisely how far the seven-year rule would be extended if the petition were approved.

SECOND MASTER'S DEGREE

A student can earn only one Master's degree in any one of the programs at Cal Poly. A student who wishes to complete a second Master's degree in another discipline, or two Master's degrees simultaneously, must complete all requirements for both degrees. No double counting of units is allowed. Existing concurrent programs are an exception to this policy. To add a second Master's degree, a student must complete a **Postbaccalaureate Change of Objective** form and secure all of the required signatures from both Master's degree programs. The student must then submit the Postbaccalaureate Change of Objective to the Graduate Education office. Note that separate Formal Study Plans and Culminating Experience forms must be completed for each Master's degree program.

ACADEMIC STANDING/GRADING

Please see the [Cal Poly Catalog](#) for an in-depth discussion of grades and grading, including Report in Progress (RP) grades and timelines for coursework completion.

Earned D+ or Lower: If a post-baccalaureate student earns a D+ or lower, the course can be retaken with the permission of the course instructor. Both grades will be used in the Final Formal Study grade calculation. Alternatively, if the course is not required, it can be removed from the Formal Study Plan and replaced with a suitable alternative.

Repeating a Course: Students may enroll in a course for credit more than once only if the catalog course description states that the course may be repeated for credit. An exception to this policy allows the repeating of a course in cases where a grade of D or F was received. Unlike for undergraduates at Cal Poly, a graduate student repeating a course cannot qualify for the removal of a lower letter grade from the overall GPA calculation on the student's transcript. See the Earned D+ or Lower section for more information.

Credit/No Credit Grading: Courses which are offered only on a credit/no credit basis also satisfy the unit requirement if a credit grade is earned. The equivalent of an A or a B (including a B-) is required to earn credit in such courses for students at graduate standing (AS-8-76). Graduate students may elect to take courses that are not part of their Formal Study Plan on a credit/no credit basis.

GRADE POINT CALCULATION FOR GRADUATE DEGREE

Satisfaction of the GPA requirement for the conferring of the Master's degree requires a GPA of 3.0 or more in degree applicable courses. Repeating a course does not remove a lower letter grade from the overall GPA calculation on the student's transcript.

ACADEMIC PROBATION

Policy currently under review, please [contact Graduate Education](#).

ACADEMIC DISQUALIFICATION

A graduate or post-baccalaureate student who has been placed on academic probation may be disqualified from further attendance in a program by action of the Dean of the College (or the Dean's designee) in which the student is enrolled and in consultation with the Dean of Graduate Education for any of the following reasons:

1. The conditions for removal of academic probation are not met within the period specified.
2. The student goes on administrative probation while on academic probation.
3. The student is subject to administrative probation for the same or similar reason for which the student has been placed on academic probation previously, although not currently in such status.

When such action is taken, the student is notified by email from the Dean of the appropriate college (or the Dean's designate). The notice should include an explanation of the basis for the action. Disqualification may be either from further registration in the program or from further enrollment at the University as determined by the Dean of Graduate Education.

It is expected that all Cal Poly students are enrolled for serious educational pursuits and that they conduct themselves so as to preserve an appropriate atmosphere of learning. It is also expected that all students who enroll at Cal Poly are willing to assume the responsibilities of membership in the campus community. Association in such a community is voluntary, and students may withdraw from their graduate programs any time they consider the obligations of membership disproportionate to the benefits. While enrolled, students are subject to campus authority that includes the prerogative of dismissing those whose conduct is inimical to the aims of an institution of higher education. While enrolled, students are subject to the regulations governing discipline stated in Education Code Section 66017 and in Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations, Sections 41301–41302, and to such rules and regulations as have been approved and promulgated by authority of the University President. Students are subject to other applicable regulations contained in the [Cal Poly Catalog](#), Campus Administrative Policies, Standards for Student Conduct, Rights and Responsibilities, and in other official university publications, including the Cal Poly website.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROBATION

A graduate student may be placed on administrative probation by action of the Dean of Graduate Education for any of the following reasons:

1. Withdrawal from all or a substantial portion of a program of study in two successive terms or in any three terms (Note: a student who is on an approved Leave of Absence is not subject to administrative probation for such withdrawal).
2. Repeated failure to make progress toward the stated degree or program objective when such failure appears to be due to circumstances within the control of the student.
3. Failure to comply, after due notice, with a CSU or university regulation which is routine for all students or a defined group of students (for example, failure to complete a required campus training or failure to comply with professional standards appropriate to the field of study).

When such action is taken, students will be notified via email and are provided with the conditions for removal from probation and the circumstances that would lead to disqualification, should probation not be removed.

ADMINISTRATIVE DISQUALIFICATION

A graduate student who has been placed on administrative probation may be disqualified from further attendance in a program by action of the Dean of Graduate Education in consultation with the College Dean for any of the following reasons:

1. The conditions for removal of administrative probation are not met within the period specified.
2. The student goes on academic probation while on administrative probation.
3. The student is subject to administrative probation for the same or similar reason for which the student has been placed on academic probation previously, although not currently in such status.

When such action is taken, the student is notified via email from the Dean of Graduate Education; the notice will include an explanation of the basis for the action. Disqualification may be either from further registration in the program or from further enrollment at the University as determined by the Dean of Graduate Education.

DISMISSAL FROM UNIVERSITY

This is an administrative action that prevents students from enrolling at Cal Poly for any future terms. Dismissal may result from academic disqualification, administrative disqualification, or from a disciplinary action. The [Office of the Registrar](#) handles dismissal from the university and will notify the student.

DISCONTINUATION

Matriculated students who have not registered for three consecutive terms (excluding summer term) and who have not been on an approved Leave of Absence will be discontinued and will not be allowed to enroll. To enroll again, students must apply for readmission before the deadline dates listed below for each term. For information on how to reapply and to be eligible for a reapplication fee waiver, please visit [Returning Students](#).

In addition, if a student has been discontinued for more than 2 years or left the university in poor academic standing, then they must submit a Petition for Special Consideration to Graduate Education officially requesting consideration to rejoin their program.

A graduate student who has been discontinued but has completed all required degree requirements except for their culminating experience (thesis, project, and/or exam) may be able to return to Cal Poly to receive their Master's degree without reapplying to their Master's program. The student is encouraged to email Graduate Education (grad@calpoly.edu) for more information.

LEAVES OF ABSENCE

A Leave of Absence is granted if a student meets one of the eligibility factors (see below) and submits a Leave of Absence form with the required signatures and documentation to the [Office of the Registrar](#) before the student leaves the university. A Leave of Absence (LOA) indicates that a student is not subject to discontinuation and remains active in the university. However, leaves of absences cannot be granted retroactively. For graduate students, the LOA excuses the necessity for continuous enrollment, but it does not extend the 7-year rule for degree completion nor will it extend the timeline for completing Incomplete or Report in Progress grades. If a student was discontinued but not granted the LOA, then they must re-apply to return to their program using the Returning Student admissions process in order to register for classes again. The maximum length for the LOA is one academic year. Students should speak directly with their College's Student Advising Center to request a one academic year extension to their existing LOA.

Eligibility factors for LOA (examples, not inclusive):

- Educational: co-op, internship, study abroad
- Medical: treatment of medical condition by doctor
- Military: deployment documentation required
- Personal: care of elder, parental duties

APPLICATION DEADLINES FOR RETURNING STUDENTS

TERM	APPLICATION DEADLINE
Fall term	July 1
Winter term	October 1
Spring term	February 1
Summer term	No applications accepted

PROCESS TO DEGREE COMPLETION

Graduate students should be in regular contact with their Faculty Advisor and Graduate Coordinator to ensure they are on track for successful degree completion, including completing all required forms. Keep in mind that it is the student's responsibility to ensure that all required forms have been signed, approved, and submitted to the Graduate Education office. All forms are on the Graduate Education website and are submitted and routed for signature via AdobeSign. For graduate students starting in fall 2022, some graduate programs have transitioned to tracking degree progress using Degree Progress Report (DPR). The current list of programs using the DPR and those that are not can be found below. Students in blended programs do not have access to DPR and are included in the non-DPR program group. The form requirements are different for DPR and Non-DPR programs, to ensure timely processing please read and follow the steps below. If you have questions, please consult your program coordinator or the Graduate Education Office.

1. WORKING FORMAL STUDY PLAN & ADVANCEMENT TO CANDIDACY

DPR PROGRAMS

- Meet with Graduate Coordinator & submit Working Formal Study Plan & Advancement to Candidacy (WFSP & ADV) by the end of 1st term in the program.



DPR Programs	Non-DPR Programs	
Ag Education	ALL GRADUATE STUDENTS STARTING BEFORE FALL 2022	
Food Science	ALL BLENDED STUDENTS	
English	Aerospace	Environmental Horticulture
History	Animal Science	Environmental Science
Psychology	Architectural Engineering	Irrigation
Industrial Engineering	Architecture	Mathematics
Curriculum & Instruction	Biology	Mechanical Engineering
Educational Leadership	Biomedical Engineering	Nutrition
HECSA	BioResource	Plant Protection
Special Education	MCRP	Polymers & Coating
Business Analytics	Civil & Environmental Engineering	Public Policy
Fire Protection Engineering	Computer Science	Quantitative Economics
Taxation	Crop Science	Transportation Planning
Packaging Value Chain	Dairy Products	Water Engineering
MBA	Electrical Engineering	Regenerative Medicine
	Engineering Management	

- Courses taken prior to matriculation at Cal Poly or taken at a different institution that will be counted towards your degree at Cal Poly must be noted on this form.
- Determine culminating experience: Thesis, Project, or Exam.
- Identify members of the evaluation committee as needed. Check with your Graduate Coordinator to determine if there is any required College-specific committee member approval or documentation.
- Evaluate core curriculum and identify electives needed to achieve academic goals. The WFSP & ADV is an agreement between the student and the university on the specific coursework that must be completed in order to fulfill the requirements for the Master's degree.
- Students who matriculated before Fall 2023 should complete the Graduation Writing Requirement (GWR) by end of 1st quarter. If in a Blended Program, GWR must be complete before filing the Postbaccalaureate Change of Objective form.
- Submission of the WFSP & ADV signifies Advancement to Candidacy (Title 5, Article 7, 40510a & 41011) and recognizes that the student has sufficiently demonstrated the ability to sustain a level of scholarly competence that should enable them to successfully complete degree requirements. The student's signature on the form signifies understanding of the overall 3.0 GPA requirement and compliance with the Continuous Enrollment policy.

Additional Information regarding how to use the DPR can be found at [Degree Progress Report](#).

NON-DPR PROGRAMS

- Meet with Graduate Coordinator & submit Working Formal Study Plan & Advancement to Candidacy (WFSP & ADV) by the end of 1st term in program.
- Courses below the 400-level may not constitute any part of the approved units on the working or Formal Study Plan (AS-313-89). However, in those programs where specific courses below the 400-level may be essential for a student's success, the student may be conditionally admitted to the program contingent upon completing those courses.

- Do not list any prerequisite courses on the Formal Study Plan.
- Determine culminating experience: Thesis, Project, or Exam.
- Identify members of evaluation committee as needed. Check with your College to see if specific documentation is required.
- Evaluate core curriculum and identify electives needed to achieve academic goals. The WFSP & ADV is an agreement between the student and the university on the specific coursework that must be completed in order to fulfill the requirements for the Master's degree.
- Students who matriculated before Fall 2023 should complete the Graduation Writing Requirement (GWR) by end of 1st quarter. If in a Blended Program, GWR must be complete before filing Postbaccalaureate Change of Objective.
- Submission of the WFSP & ADV signifies Advancement to Candidacy (Title 5, Article 7, 40510a & 41011) and recognizes that the student has sufficiently demonstrated the ability to sustain a level of scholarly competence that should enable them to successfully complete degree requirements. The student's signature on the form signifies understanding of the overall 3.0 GPA requirement and compliance with the Continuous Enrollment policy.
- If the graduate student is a NCAA Student Athlete, any changes to the plan of study (elective courses, etc.) should be submitted as they occur via a WFSP & ADV.

2. APPLICATION FOR GRADUATION (ALL PROGRAMS)

- Submit an Application for Graduation at least one term prior to the term in which you plan to graduate. For example, if you plan to graduate in Spring term, you must submit this form by the end of Winter term. For graduation in Fall, please submit this form by the end of the previous Summer term. To ensure participation in both Fall and Spring Commencement Ceremonies, students can submit the Application for Graduation early. Please note: Students graduating in Summer term who wish to participate in Spring Commencement must submit their Application for Graduation two terms early (no later than the end of Winter term).
- Can only be submitted once. Must accurately specify the student's term and year of degree completion.
- A Graduate Programs Exit Survey must be completed in order for the application to be processed. Identifying information will be kept confidential. Only aggregate responses will be used to assess program performance.

3. FINAL FORMAL STUDY PLAN (NON-DPR PROGRAMS ONLY)

- Submit a Final Formal Study Plan within the first 3 weeks of the term in which you intend to graduate.
- Must accurately list all courses that will count toward degree completion (see section on Degree Requirements).
- Every class in the Final Formal Study Plan must have a grade of C- or higher. There can be no classes on the Final Formal Study Plan with a D+, D, or D-. Please see discussion above regarding Academic Standing/Grading for additional details on CR/NC and retaking graduate courses.
- Used to determine the final GPA.

4. MASTER'S CULMINATING EXPERIENCE APPROVAL FORM (ALL PROGRAMS)

- Submit a Master's Culminating Experience form by the last day of the term (end of final exam week) in which you intend to graduate.
- Submitted only during the term in which the student is graduating.
- If submitting a thesis, refer to the Master's Thesis Submission Process.

CULMINATING EXPERIENCES: THESIS, PROJECT, AND/OR EXAM

CULMINATING EXPERIENCE

All graduate students must successfully complete the culminating experience required by their specific program (thesis, project, and/or comprehensive examination) to be granted a Master's degree (Title 5, Article 7, 40510 b.3.). The quality of work accomplished, including written expression, is the major consideration in judging the acceptability of the thesis, project, and/or comprehensive examination. Importantly, the degree award date is based on the submission date of the Master's Culminating Experience Approval Form to the Graduate Education office. The form must be submitted no later than the Friday of a term's final's week in order for the degree to be awarded in that term.

RESEARCH INVOLVING SPECIAL CONDITIONS

Research that involves the use of human subjects, vertebrate animals, hazardous materials, or information and materials subject to export-control regulations requires special campus review before the study begins. If a student's research involves any of these special conditions, they should check with their Graduate Coordinator and the Academic Department of their program for procedures.

THESIS REQUIREMENTS

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 conclusions or recommendations. The finished product evidences originality, critical and independent thinking, appropriate organization and format, and thorough documentation. Normally, an oral defense of the thesis is required. A thesis must be authored by one and only one student. (Title 5, Article 7, 40510 b.3.A.) Thesis submissions are required to be posted to DigitalCommons@CalPoly no later than the Friday of the term's final's week in order for the degree to be awarded in that term.

PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

A project is a significant undertaking appropriate to the fine and applied arts or to professional fields. It evidences originality and independent thinking, appropriate form and organization, and a rationale. It is described and summarized in a written report that includes the project's significance, objectives, methodology, and a conclusion or recommendation. A project may be completed by a team of students, but each student must write an individual report that reflects their contribution to the project and how it meets the standards of a Master's thesis as described above. A project may be evaluated by oral defense, which must be documented. A project must be approved by a faculty advisor from the student's program. A project may also utilize a committee to evaluate the student's undertaking, and the committee should meet the same standards as a thesis committee. (Title 5, Article 7, 40510 b.3.B.). Project reports are not required to be posted to DigitalCommons@CalPoly and will not be reviewed by the Graduate Education office. If a student wishes to post their project to DigitalCommons@CalPoly, they should consult with their Graduate Coordinator for more information.

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION REQUIREMENTS

The Comprehensive Exam assesses the student's ability to integrate knowledge, shows critical and independent thinking, and demonstrates a mastery of the subject matter. The results of the examination should provide documented evidence of these abilities and achievement. A record of the examination questions and responses shall be maintained by the Graduate Coordinator/Director for the program. It is the responsibility of the academic department supporting the graduate program to ensure that the comprehensive exam assesses all of the learning outcomes identified for the program. (Title 5, Article 7, 40510 b.3.C.).

ARCHIVING CULMINATING EXPERIENCE DOCUMENTATION

The American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Offices provide guidelines for retention and disposal of student records pertaining to post-baccalaureate culminating experiences. They recommend that evidence of completion be archived for 7-years. Theses are permanently stored in the Cal Poly Kennedy Library Digital Commons. Project reports must be kept by the advisor who approves the report. Exams both written and oral must be kept by the faculty who certifies that the experience was passed. Oral exams must be recorded and digitally stored.

EXPORT LAW COMPLIANCE

Research, Economic Development and Graduate Education (R-EDGE) will work with all faculty advisors of theses and projects to ensure that Cal Poly is in compliance with federal export laws. Under Federal Law, access to export-controlled information or materials to those in the U.S. on a visa is considered to be an export (even though occurring within the U.S.), potentially requiring an export license, unless a particular authorized license exemption applies. The types of equipment and information involved in graduate research (laboratory or thesis) determines the potential likelihood of being subject to export restrictions (especially Engineering, Science/Math, Agriculture). Faculty and students should consult with RED to make this determination.

Graduate student advisors in categories with a high likelihood of export restricted material/equipment should work with their College Dean's Office and R-EDGE to determine if students should be allowed to work on impacted activities. The goal is to not adversely impact research or thesis activity, but to assure that the campus takes proper steps to comply with federal export law (e.g., licenses, if necessary).

THESIS GUIDANCE (GENERAL)

THESIS OR PROJECT ADVISOR

The faculty member who serves as a graduate student's thesis or project advisor must meet the University's standards for teaching graduate courses. Graduate courses are normally taught by tenured/tenure-track faculty who demonstrate mastery of the topic by possession of the appropriate terminal degree.

With the approval of the appropriate Graduate Coordinator, Department Head/Chair, and the College Associate Dean, a qualified lecturer may serve as a thesis or project advisor. Lecturers serving as thesis or project advisors should receive supervisory units for such work, similar to tenure-line faculty in accordance with the practices and policies of the program and college.

THESIS/PROJECT COMMITTEE

The following are requirements for the members of a thesis or project committee: 1) that the graduate student have a thesis/project advisor (committee chair) who is a faculty member meeting the requirements above from the student's program or from another closely-related program; 2) that the thesis/project advisor and the student recommend a thesis/project committee comprised of at least three members; 3) that the other two members may be from the student's program or from another department or college within Cal Poly. One of the two committee members (not the committee chair) may be from an organization that sponsored the thesis/project undertaking. Please note that a project does not require a committee; it is optional and should be decided by the student and their project advisor.

Lecturers may serve on thesis or project committees, with the understanding that such service work is not required by their employment status and cannot be considered as part of the evaluative criteria during performance review, evaluation, or personnel actions.

THESIS DEFENSE CHECKLIST

1. Complete a draft of your thesis and submit to your advisor for review and feedback at least one term before the term you plan to graduate. Be sure to check the Master's Thesis Formatting Guidelines available on the Graduate Education website.
2. Edit your thesis based on your advisor's feedback and submit a copy to your committee members at least two weeks before your defense.
3. Schedule your defense date/time and reserve a conference room. You should schedule your defense at least three weeks before the end of the term in which you plan to graduate.
4. Complete your oral defense and collect all edits/feedback from your committee and update your thesis. Make sure to complete the Master's Culminating Experience Approval Form and have your committee members sign it. You will need to indicate on the form if you wish to restrict access to your thesis. Refer to the Master's Thesis Submission Process on the Graduate Education website for more detailed instructions.
5. Pay the Digital Archiving (Master's Thesis) Fee online through the Money Matters tab in Poly Portal. Email a copy of your Digital Archiving (Master's Thesis) receipt to thesis@calpoly.edu. Your Master's Culminating Experience Approval Form will not be processed until the Graduate Education office receives a copy of your Digital Archiving (Master's Thesis) receipt.
6. Upload your thesis to the library archiving website DigitalCommons@CalPoly. Refer again to the Grad Ed website for instructions. Once your thesis has been uploaded, an automatic notification will be sent to the Graduate Education thesis editor. After the editor has

reviewed your thesis, you will be contacted with any necessary formatting edits. When all of the suggested edits have been made, the thesis editor will post (publish) your thesis to DigitalCommons@CalPoly.

7. Once the Master's Culminating Experience Approval Form is submitted via Adobe Sign, a copy of the Digital Archiving (Master's Thesis) receipt is emailed to thesis@calpoly.edu, and a PDF copy of the thesis is uploaded to Digital Commons, the Graduate Education office will continue processing the Master's Culminating Experience Approval Form. The [Office of the Registrar](#) makes all final decisions regarding the granting of a degree and will notify the student when their degree is awarded.

Note: Students must submit a Master's Culminating Experience Approval Form, pay the Digital Archiving (Master's Thesis) fee and email a receipt to thesis@calpoly.edu, and upload the final version of their thesis to the DigitalCommons@CalPoly by end of business hours on the following dates in order to be considered eligible to graduate in the term specified below, assuming all other academic requirements for the degree have been satisfied.

TERM	DEADLINES FOR THESES SUBMISSIONS VIA DIGITAL COMMONS
Fall 2025	December 12, 2025 by 4 p.m.
Winter 2026	March 20, 2026 by 4 p.m.
Spring 2026	June 12, 2026 by 4 p.m.
Summer 2026	August 12, 2026 by 4 p.m.

COMMENCEMENT

A student planning to participate in commencement must file an Application for Graduation with Graduate Education in the term before the student intends to graduate. Please see [Steps to Graduation: Forms](#) for more information.

Students who graduate in Winter, Spring, or Summer term are eligible to participate in the June commencement ceremony. These students should submit their Application for Graduation no later than the end of Winter term to ensure they will be included in commencement.



Students who graduate in Fall are eligible to participate in the December commencement ceremony. These students should submit their Application for Graduation no later than the end of Summer term to ensure they will be included in commencement. If a student wishes to participate in a different commencement ceremony, they should visit [Commencement](#) for more information.

Students can confirm that they will appear on the bookstore list (which allows them to purchase a cap and gown) and the Commencement Bulletin by checking their status on Poly Profile only after their Application for Graduation has been received and processed by the [Office of the Registrar](#). On Poly Profile, under the Career Program Plan section and the Postbaccalaureate Graduate career, students will see an “Expected graduation is...” notation once their paperwork has been processed. Corresponding deadlines for these items are communicated to students via email from Graduate Education and Commencement.

Please note that despite participation in commencement ceremonies, students are not official Cal Poly graduates until they have completed ALL degree requirements satisfactorily and have received a “Congratulations” email from the [Office of the Registrar](#), Evaluations Unit.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Master’s degree candidates who have institutional post-baccalaureate GPAs above 3.90 are eligible to be recognized for Academic Excellence. Each program may nominate up to the top 10% of students in the program.

The following criteria will be evaluated: GPA, level of difficulty in the courses taken, academic achievements, and quality of the thesis or project, if applicable.

Nominations must be approved by the appropriate College Dean or their designee. Upon final approval by the Dean of Graduate Education. The distinction will be noted in commencement materials.

GRADUATION WITH DISTINCTION

Graduation with Distinction will be determined by the [Office of the Registrar](#) after a student’s Final Formal Study Plan has been reviewed and approved. It will NOT be awarded at the December or June Commencement Ceremonies. The designation will appear on a student’s final transcript and diploma. The criterion for graduation with distinction is defined at [Office of the Registrar](#) and in the [Cal Poly Catalog](#): “a student whose grade point average is 3.75 or better may upon the recommendation of the College Dean be designated as ‘Graduating with Distinction.’”

OUTSTANDING GRADUATE STUDENT AWARDS

An Outstanding Graduate Student Award will be given to one student from each College/School (CAFES, CAED, CENG, CLA, COSM, OCOB, & SOE). Each Program Coordinator should recommend one student from their program to their College Associate Dean.

Master’s Degree candidates who have received degrees or who are receiving degrees during the current academic year are eligible for this award. The following criteria will be evaluated:

1. Academic achievements
2. Creative achievements
3. Scholarly and professional potential
4. Service to the university and community
5. Other notable or outstanding characteristics that demonstrate excellence

Final selections are submitted to the Graduate Education Office. Awardees will be recognized at the Commencement Ceremony.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

In addition to the many types of financial aid available, the university has several opportunities that graduate students can apply for to receive financial support toward their educational goals. Students should contact their Graduate Coordinator or the Graduate Education office to determine the opportunities that will provide the maximum benefit to their academic goals and support a timely completion of their degree.

- Graduate Assistant Fellowships (requires program collaboration)
- Resident Tuition Waivers
- Non-Resident Tuition Waivers
- Graduate Equity Fellowships
- California Pre-Doctoral Program
- Chancellor's Doctoral Incentive Program

The expected outcomes of our financial support program are as follows:

- Enable top quality students to join and remain at Cal Poly by providing necessary financial support.
- Support the teacher-scholar model by enabling students to do creative works that are either published or presented at an appropriate conference.
- Provide an experience that deepens the student's mastery of their field of study through the learn-by-doing experience.
- Support campus engagement with justice, diversity, equity and inclusion efforts.

General criteria for receiving awards:

- Appointment will improve time-to-graduation.
- Student must be at graduate standing, have a 3.0 or higher GPA, and be in good standing with their program.
- Must have filed a Working Formal Study Plan & Advancement to Candidacy form with the Graduate Education office (continuing students only; incoming students must file in their first term).
- Must be enrolled on a full-time basis for each term they receive funds. Full-time status for graduate students is 8 units/term. Alternatively, students enrolled in only thesis units (even if less than 8 units) are eligible. Students enrolled in GS 597 are not eligible.
- Students pursuing a blended program are not eligible until they complete their Postbaccalaureate Change of Objective form and transition to graduate status.

Students (newly admitted and currently enrolled) can apply for financial support by following the steps outline at [Graduate Education](#).

GRADUATE ASSISTANT FELLOWSHIPS (GAF)

Cal Poly has a program that awards appointments for Graduate Assistant Fellowship (GAF) positions. Funds for the graduate student GAF program are provided by Student Success Fees provided through the Office of the Provost.

GAF Appointments: Under immediate supervision, the Graduate Assistant supports a regular faculty member with various professional and/or teaching duties associated with the subjects or programs in which the assistant is doing graduate work. This work should not take precedence over the student's successful completion of their graduate degree program (CSU HR 2005-29).

Applications are accepted through the academic year, with most of the appointments assigned in the spring for the following academic year. The Dean of Graduate Education will make the final decision on all appointments in consultation with Program Coordinators. Typically, GAF appointments are for an entire academic year.

Qualifications: Knowledge of the subject matter of the discipline in which assigned. Ability to relate well to others within the academic environment. Ability to supervise, assist, and train undergraduate students. Ability to assist faculty in the completion of special projects or research within the discipline.

In addition to the general criteria listed above, additional eligibility criteria include:

- GAF appointments are limited to a maximum of 3-terms in any one academic year.

- GAF appointments are stipends based on a pay rate of 10 hours of work per week; note that the total collective work hours for a student cannot exceed 20 hours/week.
- Certificate and Credential Programs are not eligible for GAF appointments.

The Graduate Assistant is distinguished from those classifications used for undergraduate student help in the instructional program (ISA) (e.g. those who perform clerical or other routine tasks such as grading examinations, recording grades, etc.), by the following:

- Graduate Assistants are provided part-time employment and practical experience in fields related to their advanced study.
- Graduate Assistants provide research assistance to faculty members.

Graduate Assistant work may involve supervising students in a classroom, workshop, or laboratory (where final responsibility for the class is vested in a member of the faculty); training students in the use of equipment or other resources; assisting faculty with research and preparation of course materials; participating in the evaluation of students' work; tutoring students; and other related work. Graduate Assistants are not responsible for the instructional content of a course, selecting student assignments, planning of examinations, determining the term grade for students, instructing the entire enrollment of a course, or providing the entire instruction of a group of students enrolled in a course. Graduate Assistants may not be employed to assist in a course in which they are enrolled, nor should they be consulted regarding the grading of their peers.

Supervision: GAs are expected to work under the supervision of a faculty member. The supervisor is responsible for overseeing the work of the student employee (including attention to such issues as whether or not the GA is performing all required duties in a satisfactory manner, as well as serving as a mentor to the student employee with regards to such matters as appropriate grading standards, classroom management, avoidance of discrimination/bias towards students, etc.). At all times, the supervisor and the student must keep in mind that a student employee is to be a student first and foremost. Appointment as a GA should further, not hinder, a graduate student's training. For this reason, supervisors should pay attention to whether or not a student's employment is compatible with satisfactory progress in the degree program.

RESIDENT TUITION WAIVERS

A limited number of resident tuition waivers are available for graduate students who meet the requirements for residency in the State of California, regardless of documentation status. The waiver applies to CA state tuition only and does not cover University fees. The waivers are for graduate students enrolled in **state supported graduate programs only**, not for self-support graduate programs (Fire Protection Engineering, Accounting, Tax, Business Analytics, Economics, Packaging Value Chain). The criteria that should be addressed in the application include:

- Scholastic achievement including GPA, standardized tests such as GRE, GMAT, etc., and honors/awards (only students with at least a 3.0 GPA overall will be considered).
- Contributions the student would make to the program and campus, including engagement with campus and community justice, diversity, equity and inclusion efforts.
- Significant accomplishments such as published research work. Recognition of excellence in the field by receipt of academic awards and activities in professional societies.
- Significance of the waiver in the student's decision to enroll (e.g., financial need, personal circumstances, competitive offers).

Tuition waivers will normally be for three consecutive terms, typically beginning with the fall term. Recipients must be engaged in full-time studies toward their degree, which means enrollment in a minimum of 8 units per term. Recipients of CA State University Grants (SUG) are not eligible for a Tuition Waiver.

NON-RESIDENT TUITION WAIVERS

A limited number of non-resident tuition waivers are available for graduate students. The waiver is defined as a reduction in tuition to the California resident tuition rate for non-resident students. The waivers provide financial support for highly qualified applicants from outside the State of California, regardless of documentation status.. The criteria that should be addressed in the application include:

- Scholastic achievement including GPA, standardized tests such as GRE, GMAT, etc., and honors/awards (only students with at least a 3.0 GPA overall will be considered).
- Contributions the student would make to the program and campus, including engagement with campus and community justice,

diversity, equity and inclusion efforts.

- Significant accomplishments such as published research work. Recognition of excellence in the field by receipt of academic awards and activities in professional societies.
- Significance of the waiver in the student's decision to enroll (e.g., financial need, personal circumstances, competitive offers).
- Tuition waivers will normally be for three consecutive terms, typically beginning with the fall term. The waivers are for graduate students enrolled in state-support graduate programs only, not self-support graduate programs. Recipients must be engaged in full-time studies toward their degree, which means enrollment in a minimum of 8 units per term.

GRADUATE EQUITY FELLOWSHIPS

This program seeks to increase the diversity of students completing Master's degree programs in the CSU. It provides fellowships for economically disadvantaged CSU students who have had success in overcoming educational disadvantages and promotes faculty mentoring and research opportunities to support graduate study.

Academic Qualifications: Applicants must either be making progress toward a Master's degree or have been accepted to a Master's program at Cal Poly and must have satisfied all criteria for admission. For details concerning admission requirements, consult the current [Cal Poly Catalog](#) or contact the Program Coordinator of the specific program. Fellowship recipients are required to maintain a grade point average of 3.0 or higher and be engaged in full-time studies toward their degree, which means enrolling in a minimum of 8 units per term of 400/500 level courses.

Residency: Applicants must qualify as a California resident by meeting the CSU requirements for payment of in-state fees, regardless of documentation status.

Financial Need: A Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or California Dream Act Application (CADAA) must be filed two weeks before completion of the application to the Graduate Equity Fellowship to ensure that the results are available for consideration. Additional information can be obtained from the Cal Poly Financial Aid Office. Applicants must also comply with all standard requirements for receiving financial aid at Cal Poly.

Duration: The typical grant period for this award is 2 academic terms in the same academic year of the application cycle. The award is normally distributed during the Winter and Spring terms.

STATE UNIVERSITY GRANTS

These grants provide need-based awards to cover a portion of the State Tuition Fee for eligible undergraduate, graduate, and postbaccalaureate students who are California residents or are otherwise determined as eligible, such as AB 540-eligible students. Systemwide, the priority is to award a SUG at least equal to the amount of the State Tuition Fees to eligible students who apply for financial aid by May 2nd, who have an expected family contribution (EFC) of \$4,000 or less, and who are not receiving a Cal Grant or other award designated to cover fees. Funding for this program is limited. Students must reapply for consideration every year. State University Grant awards are limited based on the number of units a student has earned and the published length of their academic program.

For all graduate students who receive State University Grants, effective 2013 by CSU mandate, Master's level students who have earned more than 125% of units toward completion of their program/degree at the post baccalaureate level are no longer eligible to receive a State University Grant (SUG). For example, if the minimum units for the graduate program are 45, then a student may receive SUG funding for up to 57 units. Please note that the number of units subject to this 125% limitation includes any units that are part of conditional admittance requirements. Please contact the appropriate Program Coordinator to determine the number of units required by conditional admittance to take as part of matriculation into the graduate program (max 12 units). Please contact the Financial Aid Office with any questions (Administration Building, Room 212; 805-756-2927; financialaid@calpoly.edu).

CALIFORNIA PRE-DOCTORAL PROGRAM

The California Pre-Doctoral Program is designed to increase the diversity of the pool from which the California State University draws its faculty. It does so by supporting the doctoral aspirations of CSU students who have experienced economic and educational disadvantages. A special emphasis is placed on increasing the number of CSU students who enter graduate programs at one of the University of California campuses.

Please visit [California Pre-Doctoral Program](#) for more information on eligibility, selection criteria and application processes.

CHANCELLOR'S DOCTORAL INCENTIVE PROGRAM (CDIP)

This program provides low-interest student loans (up to \$30K) to a limited number of individuals pursuing full-time doctoral degrees at accredited universities throughout the United States. After participants receive their doctoral degrees and obtain a qualifying position in the CSU, a portion of their loan from this program will be forgiven every year.

For more information on eligibility, selection criteria and application processes, please see the [Chancellor's Doctoral Incentive Program](#).

ACADEMIC RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

Cal Poly is committed to creating and maintaining an intellectual community designed to promote educational goals. In this community, students are entitled to a classroom environment where they have the academic freedom to express their ideas and opinions freely, to learn from competent and professional faculty, and to build critical thinking and reasoning skills. For a full statement of the policy regarding academic rights, see the section entitled Student Academic Rights & Responsibilities within Policies on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

The value of an academic degree is based upon the reputation of the university. Tolerating academic misconduct ultimately harms that reputation. The Standards for Student Conduct require that students who witness academic dishonesty notify their instructor, Department Chair, or the Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities (OSRR). Disciplinary sanctions can be imposed for "encouraging, permitting, or assisting another to do any act that could subject him or her to discipline" [Title 5, Article 2, Section 41301 (b) (20)].

Academic integrity is essential to the educational process. Traditional academic practices require that faculty members address cases of academic dishonesty in the classroom. In addition, Executive Order 1073 (Article III, K, Cases Involving Academic Dishonesty), insists that CSU faculty members report any infractions to a central location so that a student can be held accountable for multiple academic violations, and the campus can recognize any patterns of misconduct. At Cal Poly, this central location is the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities.

The resolution of academic dishonesty cases seeks a balance between encouraging a student's professional development and upholding the standards of the academic community. The faculty member can recommend that OSRR either provide a written warning to the student or file formal charges. OSRR ultimately evaluates the merits of the allegation according to the student conduct process and determines appropriate sanctions, if warranted, based on the specific facts of the case.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is a direct violation of intellectual and academic honesty. Although it exists in many forms, all plagiarism refers to the same act: representing somebody else's work as one's own. The most extreme forms of plagiarism are the use of a paper written by another person or obtained from a commercial source or use of a paper made up of passages copied word for word without acknowledgment. Paraphrasing another author's ideas or quoting even limited portions of their text without proper citation is also an act of plagiarism. Plagiarism will not be tolerated in the Cal Poly academic community. It will result in a failing grade for the assignment, exam, or task. It may result in a failing grade in the course. See the Cal Poly Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities for further information on plagiarism and disciplinary actions that may be taken. See the Academic Programs website: Academic Policies Cheating & Plagiarism, along with Academic Senate Resolution AS-722-10, Campus Administrative Manual, and Section 684.

GRADUATE PROGRAMS

Cal Poly has over thirty-five separate Master's degree programs, and with the inclusion of specializations, there are a plethora of degree paths offered by the University. *A complete listing of all of the graduate programs is maintained by the Graduate Education office and available on the previous page.*

BLENDED DEGREE PROGRAMS

The academic objective of a Blended Program is to provide an accelerated route to degree completion by simultaneously awarding both Bachelor's and Master's degrees. Blended Programs provide students with the possibility of applying 400- and/or 500- level courses completed during their junior and senior year to their graduate Formal Study Plan (if those courses are not part of their undergraduate requirements). Blended Programs also enable students completing a thesis/project as their Master's degree to align the objectives of their Master's culminating event with those of their senior project. All Blended Programs must follow the policies outlined in Cal Poly Academic Senate Resolution AS-877-19.

Cal Poly received permission from the CSU Chancellor's Office (AA-2012-01) to offer Blended Programs that award a Bachelor's degree and a Master's degree at the same time. The Blended Programs started in 1998 and completed their Pilot Period in 2005. The Academic Programs and Graduate Education offices at Cal Poly have approved several majors to be eligible to pursue a paired Bachelor's and Master's degree. Please contact the Graduate Education office to confirm if degree objectives fit into one of these paired programs.

Admission to a Blended Program: Students may be admitted to a Blended Program up to two years before their expected undergraduate graduation date during their third or fourth year of undergraduate study. Admission recommendation is determined at the program level with final approval from the Dean of Graduate Education and the [Office of the Registrar](#). The student must submit a Blended Programs Application Approval Form to the Graduate Education office via AdobeSign once they have been accepted into the Blended Program. Please note that acceptance into a Blended Program does not constitute a change in the student's status. Only once the student has submitted a Postbaccalaureate Change of Objective will they see a change in their student status. Until such a change occurs, the student is seen by Cal Poly's system as an undergraduate student only.

Transition to Graduate Standing: Students admitted to the Blended Program will maintain their undergraduate status until they have completed at least 91% of their undergraduate degree requirements. At the beginning of the first academic term in which the student will complete this percentage of their baccalaureate program, the student is eligible to file a Postbaccalaureate Change of Objective (PBCO) form with the Graduate Education office. Once the form is processed, the student will transition to graduate status and incur the appropriate increase in tuition fees.

Students must complete the Graduate Writing Requirement (GWR) before transitioning to graduate status. Additionally, students must have terms standing for a minimum of two terms before degree completion.

Double Counting Units: Not all Blended Programs allow double counting; the student must speak directly with their Graduate Program Coordinator to determine the appropriate number of units (if any) to double count.

Senior Project Requirements: Students in a Blended Program must complete all undergraduate requirements – including senior project requirements as detailed in the [Cal Poly Catalog](#) – along with the culminating experience required by the individual graduate program. In cases where the graduate culminating experience is a thesis or project, a student can align the objectives for this culminating experience with those of their senior project. The graduate thesis or project and the senior project must have separate course numbers, each with their own learning objectives and final deliverables. All Blended Programs must follow the policies outlined in Cal Poly Academic Senate Resolution AS-877-19.

Impact on Financial Aid: Students should check with the Office of Financial Aid to determine how transitioning to graduate status will impact their eligibility for financial aid.

Progress-to-Degree on Cal Poly Portal: Once students transition to graduate status, they will lose access to Degree Planner and their Degree Progress Report on their portal. Students and programs are encouraged to maintain copies of degree progress prior to transitioning to graduate



status.

Co-Op Experiences: Blended students cannot file Leaves of Absence or leave for a Co-op during the first term they have reached graduate standing. If a student does not enroll in regular coursework during their first term at graduate standing, Cal Poly's system discontinues them as "no shows." All Blended students must enroll in coursework during their first term at graduate standing.

Graduate Status for Minimum of 2 Terms: All Blended students MUST be at graduate status for a minimum of 2 terms before they are eligible to graduate.

Academic Units Required for Completion: Under Title V, a minimum of 225 total units are required (Bachelor's 180 + Master's 45) for receiving both the Bachelor's and the Master's degree if pursuing a blended degree program. A Blended Program can allow double counting equal to the number of units greater than 180, but not to exceed 9 units.

Process to Award Both Degrees: Students must submit the following forms to Graduate Education with the indicated approval signatures: Working Formal Study Plan & Advancement to Candidacy, Application for Graduation, Final Formal Study Plan, and a Master's Culminating Experience Approval Form (Thesis, Project, or Exam). When all requirements have been met for both degrees, the [Office of the Registrar](#) re-opens undergraduate matriculation (secondary), posts the undergraduate degree, then completes graduate matriculation (primary). Both degrees are awarded at the same time and recognized at a graduation ceremony. If a student fails to complete their Master's requirements but completes all of their undergraduate degree requirements, then the undergraduate matriculation can be re-opened in order to grant the Bachelor's degree. The student must submit a Postbaccalaureate Change of Objective and change their degree objective back to their undergraduate program. Graduate Coordinators should advise students to ensure that their study plans include completion of all undergraduate degree requirements, including required senior project courses. Any research work should be directed so that a student could submit a senior project report even if the effort does not result in a Master's thesis. Every effort must be made to enable students to satisfy their undergraduate requirements in the event that they choose not to complete their Master's degree.

Cross Disciplinary Blended Applicants: Only students from approved degree pairings may apply to one of the Blended Programs. Note that all Blended Programs must adhere to the CSU Coded Memorandum (AA-2012-01) objective of providing an accelerated pathway to a Master's degree. Accordingly, the combined program must only require those units essential to the primary degree path. Blended students must not be required to take any additional courses other than those identified in the [Cal Poly Catalog](#) for each degree.

Returning Blended Students: If a Blended student becomes discontinued and wants to return to complete either Bachelor's and/or Master's required coursework, they should first contact the Graduate Education office (grad@calpoly.edu) for next steps. Admissions information at [Returning Students](#). Once their Bachelor's degree requirements are satisfied, they can petition to transition to graduate standing using a Postbaccalaureate Change of Objective.



**APPROVED
BLENDED PAIRED
PROGRAMS**

COLLEGE	MASTER'S DEGREE	BACHELOR'S DEGREE
CENG		
1.	Aerospace Engineering	Aerospace Engineering
2.	Biomedical Engineering	Biomedical Engineering
		Chemistry
		Electrical Engineering
		Mechanical Engineering
		Computer Engineering, CPE
		Materials Engineering
3.	Civil and Environmental	Civil Engineering
		Environmental Engineering
4.	Computer Science	Computer Science, CSC
		Computer Engineering, CPE
		Software Engineering, SE
5.	Electrical Engineering	Electrical Engineering
		Computer Engineering, CPE
6.	Industrial Engineering	Industrial Engineering
		Mechanical Engineering
		Materials Engineering, MATE
7.	Mechanical Engineering	Aerospace Engineering
		Mechanical Engineering
8.	Engineering Management	Aerospace Engineering
	formerly Engineering w/ITM	Biomedical Engineering
		Environmental Engineering
		Industrial Engineering
		Materials Engineering
		Manufacturing Engineering
		Mechanical Engineering
CAED		
9.	Architectural Engineering	Architectural Engineering
10.	Architecture	Architecture
CSM		
11.	Mathematics	Mathematics
12.	Polymers and Coatings	Chemistry
		Biochemistry
		Materials Engineering, MATE
CAFES		
13.	Food Science	Food Science
CLA		
14.	English	English
15.	Public Policy	Political Science

If upon returning the student enrolls in 599 or graduate (500-) level courses, they are responsible for paying Continuous Enrollment fees (GS 597) for the period they were absent. If they enroll in undergrad courses ONLY, they are not required to pay continuous enrollment fees.

CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

A Certificate Program offers postbaccalaureate coursework leading to a specific, applied, and focused set of learning outcomes. It may be interdisciplinary and should have some professional application (e.g., enables professional licensing). A Certificate Program declares that a student has satisfactorily completed a sequence of advanced academic courses that provide instruction in a stand-alone, coherent body of specialized knowledge. It is designed to meet requirements for professional competence, expand access to specialized knowledge, or meet occupational needs for advanced interdisciplinary work. It consists of 12-24 term units (3-6 courses) and may be provided via Special Sessions (self-support) through Extended Education.

There are two different types of certificate programs offered by Cal Poly: Graduate Certificates and Professional Certificates. Both include courses that must be approved by the Academic Senate and are awarded with academic credit that is documented on a Cal Poly transcript. The main difference is that Graduate Certificates require students to be matriculated and Professional Certificates do not require matriculation.

Graduate Certificate: A set of courses that build upon each other to develop a deeper level of expertise in a field of study. Students must follow all of the guidelines as described in AS-726-11 and AS-774-14. The Graduate Certificate requires that a student be matriculated through the Cal Poly Admissions Office to enroll in classes, and the certificate the student receives is awarded by the Office of the Registrar.

Professional Certificate: A set of individual courses that can be taken in any sequence and provides expertise required in a professional field of employment. Students must follow all of the guidelines for Special-Session or Open University courses (CSU EO-1047). The Professional Certificate does not require a student to be matriculated, and courses are offered through Extended Education. The Professional Certificate is awarded by Extended Education.

AS Resolution AS-726-11 March 8, 2011

SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

- Admission to a Graduate Certificate program requires a Bachelor's degree from an accredited institution with a major in a relevant field of study. The applicant must have earned a GPA of at least 2.5 in the last degree completed.
- Admission to a Professional Certificate program requires consent of the instructor, and students must apply through Extended Education. Applications can be completed anytime throughout the year. Students can be concurrently matriculated in a Master's degree program at Cal Poly and a Professional Certificate program.
- A minimum GPA of 3.0 is required for successful completion of either a Professional or Graduate Certificate program. Students may not elect to take courses required for the certificate as credit/no credit. A certificate program must be completed within three years.
- Students who are enrolled in either type of certificate program are exempt from the continuous enrollment requirement for graduate students.
- There is no GWR requirement for either type of Certificate program.
- There are NO conditional admissions for either type of Certificate program.
- If either Certificate program utilizes online courses, international students must satisfy Cal Poly's English Language requirements, even if they do not need an F1 VISA to attend courses on campus.
- Students in either type of Certificate program are not eligible for financial aid through Cal Poly.
- Students in a Graduate Certificate program must submit both a Final Formal Study Plan and an Application for Graduation to the Graduate Education office to receive a certificate.
- For Graduate Certificate courses, no more than 30% of the course units can be taken while not matriculated (EO 1099).
- Only 4 units can be transferred from another school to count toward either Certificate program.
- No more than 24 units from Certificate(s) can be applied toward a Cal Poly Master's degree program.

CAL POLY'S COMMITMENT TO INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE

Cal Poly strives for Inclusive Excellence, the idea that in order to be excellent, an institution is constantly evolving toward becoming more diverse, equitable and inclusive. The university recognizes and celebrates the value of the different viewpoints, knowledge, cultures and skills that diverse communities bring to the educational experience.

Inclusive Excellence is the engine that drives diversity and inclusion efforts at Cal Poly. The Inclusive Excellence model is built on the following principles:

In higher education, an excellent institution is an inclusive institution.

1. All students should have the opportunity to succeed.
2. All students should benefit educationally from participating in a community where people differ from one another.
3. In order to be successful community members, graduates must be prepared to live and work in a diverse world.
4. An inclusive community is characterized by mutual respect, a sense of belonging, and personal safety.

Consistent with Cal Poly's Learn by Doing philosophy, we believe that all of our students will best develop these abilities by living and learning in a diverse and inclusive environment.

Ultimately, the goal is that our campus — students, faculty and staff — should reflect the diversity of California. For that to be possible, everyone must rightly believe that they are welcome at Cal Poly because they feel welcome in an inclusive community.



CAL POLY INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY POLICY

The University is committed to providing an intellectual environment in which all members of the academic community—whether they are faculty engaged in life-long professional development, students pursuing educational objectives, or staff dedicated to their own career goals—learn to the fullest extent possible. The University also recognizes and values creativity and innovation as part of this learning process. Similarly, the University recognizes the importance of, and wishes to encourage, the transfer of new knowledge, generated in the University, to the private sector for the public good. At the same time, as a publicly funded institution, the University must be a good steward of the public resources provided to it and must safeguard against the use of public funds for private gain. For more information, please see the [Intellectual Property Policy](#).

CAL POLY'S COMMITMENT TO DATA SECURITY

We all have a shared responsibility to protect the confidentiality, integrity and availability of Cal Poly information assets. The Information Security website is intended to provide Cal Poly community members with the tools and information to protect themselves, their computers and devices, and help prevent the unauthorized access to or use of University information.

Please be sure to follow all rules and policies at [Information Security](#).

GRADUATE PROGRAMS: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Please contact Graduate Education at grad@calpoly.edu or call 805-756-2328 during weekday business hours of 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Pacific Time with any questions regarding graduate programs at Cal Poly.

For frequently asked questions (FAQs), please visit [Graduate Education](#).

UNIVERSITY CONTACTS AND INFORMATION RESOURCES

<p>Admissions Office gradadmissions@calpoly.edu international-admissions@calpoly.edu (805) 756-2311</p>	<p>Financial Aid Office financialaid@calpoly.edu (805) 756-2927</p>
<p>Associated Students, Inc. (ASI) www.asi.calpoly.edu (805) 756-1281</p>	<p>Graduate Education Office grad@calpoly.edu (805) 756-2328</p>
<p>Campus Health & Wellbeing health@calpoly.edu • Bldg. 27 (805) 756-1211</p>	<p>Kennedy Library library@calpoly.edu (805) 756-5760</p>
<p>Career Services careerservices@calpoly.edu (805) 756-2501</p>	<p>Office of the Registrar evaluations@calpoly.edu (805) 756-2396</p>
<p>Children's Center (ASI) Bldg. 133 (805) 756-1267</p>	<p>Performing Arts Center pacslo@calpoly.edu (805) 756-7222</p>
<p>Dean of Students deanofstudents@calpoly.edu (805) 756-0327</p>	<p>Recreation Center (ASI) Bldg. 43 (805) 756-1366</p>
<p>Disability Resource Center drc@calpoly.edu (805) 756-1395</p>	<p>Transportation & Parking Services parking@calpoly.edu (805) 756-6654</p>
<p>Extended Education extended@calpoly.edu (805) 756-2053</p>	<p>Writing and Learning Center writingandlearning@calpoly.edu (805) 756-1041</p>

CAL POLY CAMPUS MAP

