

# GRADUATE EDUCATION POLICIES

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## Regulations Governing Graduate Students

In addition to reviewing policies and definitions included in this section, you may want to consult the Academic Policies and Regulations (<https://catalog.csuchico.edu/academic-standards-policies/academic-policies-regulations/>) section for information concerning general University policies that apply to all students. The Office of Graduate Studies Graduate Student Resources (<https://www.csuchico.edu/graduatestudies/current-students/grad-student-resources.shtml>) web page provides links to additional information on graduate education policies, planning a master's degree program, and meeting all requirements.

Following is an overview of policies applicable to master's degree, credential, certificate, and unclassified students as set forth by Graduate Studies. For information on specific departmental requirements, refer to the individual program descriptions in the Academic Programs (<https://catalog.csuchico.edu/academic-programs-resources/academic-programs/#masterstext>) section.

As a master's degree student, you are governed by the requirements that are in effect at the time of your admission to conditionally classified status for that degree. If you are making normal progress towards the degree and do not interrupt your program, you may elect to meet the degree requirements in effect either at the time of your admission to conditionally classified status or in the term that you complete all requirements for the degree, except that substitutions for discontinued courses may be authorized or required by the academic department offering the degree.

If you interrupt a program, you may be subject to the requirements in effect at the time of readmission.

## Student Responsibility

The University staff and faculty, particularly those in Graduate Studies, the department, and, in the case of master's degree students, the graduate coordinator and graduate advisory committee, are here to provide advice and assistance in completing the application and degree, credential, or certificate program. Although this assistance will help you fulfill the requirements, ultimately you are responsible for meeting all requirements and deadlines, academic and administrative, as detailed in this catalog or elsewhere as specified by Graduate Studies or your department. Preparing a Master's Degree Program Plan in consultation with your graduate coordinator and graduate advisory committee and submitting it to Graduate Studies during your first semester will significantly help you meet University requirements in a timely manner. Should you have questions on policies or procedures at any point in your program, both your department and Graduate Studies are available to help you.

## Graduate Coordinators

Each graduate program has a designated graduate coordinator who is responsible for reviewing applications, assisting students in developing programs of study, endorsing study lists, maintaining records of all students enrolled in the program, and supplying information requested by the graduate dean. The graduate coordinator (<https://www.csuchico.edu/graduatestudies/programs/index.shtml>) for your discipline will be able to respond to specific program questions.

## Change in Classification

A change in classification is defined as advancement in the master's program from conditionally classified to classified status, or from classified status to candidacy. Normally a change occurs after specified departmental and University requirements have been met, and the change is initiated by the student with a request to the graduate coordinator.

## Change of Discipline

You may change from one master's degree program to another through an application process in Graduate Studies. Admission to one degree program does not ensure admission to another, and you must satisfy all admission requirements of the new program in effect at the time of the change.

## Multiple Degree Objectives

You may become a candidate for more than one graduate degree providing you complete separate programs of study in different graduate programs. You may not complete two master's degrees in the same discipline even though an academic department may offer various emphases within the field of study. No course may be counted towards a master's degree that has been counted towards any previous degree at any institution. Pursuing two graduate degrees concurrently requires approval of both departments.

You may also pursue both a master's degree and a second bachelor's degree concurrently. However, no course may be counted toward both objectives.

## Continuous Enrollment

Students pursuing a master's degree must enroll each semester until the degree is awarded. Both enrollments as a regular student and adjunct enrollment satisfy this continuous enrollment requirement. (Special Session and Open University enrollments do not.) Adjunct enrollment consists of registration in GRST 899 through Professional & Continuing Education, for which an administrative fee is charged. Registration in GRST 899 must be completed by the end of the fourth week of classes each semester (the University census date). Late fees are charged for non-compliance with this policy. No credit is earned for adjunct enrollment, but it allows you to maintain your status in the master's degree program and to make minimal use of selected University resources, including the library, laboratories, computer facilities, faculty advisors, and the thesis editor. Adjunct enrollment serves both students who have finished their coursework but have not yet met all degree requirements (e.g., terminal project, incomplete grade, etc.), and those who choose not to enroll in regular classes for a semester. However, it is not to be used to postpone the start of graduate study, and you may not enroll in GRST 899 for the semester of your admission to a master's degree program. Transcripts will be required of students who have attended another school while on adjunct enrollment at California State University, Chico.

Master's degree students who do not maintain continuous enrollment may be asked to reapply to the program that they have interrupted when they wish to return. They may be subject to any new admission requirements and, if readmitted, may be held to any new degree requirements. In addition, they will be required to petition to complete late registration in GRST 899 for all semesters that they were out of compliance with the continuous enrollment policy. This policy applies to all master's degree students, including those who have completed all of the courses required for their programs.

## Postbaccalaureate Leave of Absence

If you are not in a master's degree program and you wish to break your enrollment in the University, you may not register in GRST 899 to maintain continuing status. Instead, credential, certificate, and unclassified students in good standing may request to take a leave of absence from their program for a maximum of two consecutive semesters. You must have been an enrolled student for the semester immediately preceding the leave, and submit your Postbaccalaureate Leave of Absence ([https://www.csuchico.edu/graduatestudies/\\_assets/documents/leave-of-absence.pdf](https://www.csuchico.edu/graduatestudies/_assets/documents/leave-of-absence.pdf)) request to Graduate Studies no later than the fourth week of the first semester of the leave.

## Maintaining Good Academic Standing Master's Degree Students

As a student admitted to a master's degree program, you must maintain a minimum 3.0 grade point average in each of the following three categories: all coursework taken at any accredited institution subsequent to admission to the master's program; all coursework taken at Chico State subsequent to admission to the program; and all courses taken in fulfillment of your approved program. Failure to maintain a 3.0 average in any category will result in academic notice in the master's program. Failure to remedy the deficiency within one semester with appropriate courses approved by the program coordinator may result in disqualification from the master's program. Students disqualified from a master's degree program will not be allowed to enroll in any regular session of the University for at least one semester, and they must successfully petition for reinstatement to the University, and reapply and be admitted to a program in order to return to regular enrollment. Additional information and specific procedures related to the academic standing of master's students can be found on the Graduate Studies website.

If your major department finds that you do not satisfy established criteria in the discipline, you can be placed on administrative-academic notice and face administrative-academic disqualification if the criteria are not met within a specified period. Additional information on these actions is available in the Academic Policies and Regulations (<https://catalog.csuchico.edu/academic-standards-policies/academic-policies-regulations/>) section.

## All Postbaccalaureate Students

You will be placed on academic notice for any semester of enrollment in which either your Chico State grade point average or your cumulative grade point average (which includes all transferred work) falls below 2.0 for all postbaccalaureate coursework. While on academic notice, you will become subject to academic disqualification if at the end of a semester of enrollment either your Chico State or cumulative grade point average remains below 2.0. If disqualified, you will not be allowed to continue in the University for at least a semester and must be reinstated and readmitted to return. Disqualified students may take Special Session courses through Professional & Continuing Education

(<http://rce.csuchico.edu/>) but will not be allowed to take courses through the Open University program without special permission.

You may also become subject to academic disqualification while not on academic notice if your cumulative grade point average falls below 1.0 and the cumulative grade point average is so low that in view of your overall educational record, it seems unlikely that the deficiency will be removed within a reasonable period.

## Definition of a Full-Time Graduate Student

Full-time graduate students are those who are admitted to a master's degree program and carry at least eight semester units. For students with appointments as graduate assistants, teaching associates, or part-time faculty, half-time (20 hours/week) employment may be regarded as the equivalent of four semester units of graduate coursework in determining full-time status. Appointments for fewer than 20 hours/week are prorated in determining full-time status.

Note: For purposes of financial aid eligibility, students may not be allowed to count employment toward their full-time status; please consult a financial aid counselor.

## Graduate Credit for Excess Units Taken as an Undergraduate

Excess units are defined as units completed in addition to the requirements for the baccalaureate. Chico State students who meet certain conditions may have excess units taken in their final undergraduate semester approved for graduate credit towards a master's degree. To request approval of these units, you must:

1. Have a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.75 at the start of your final undergraduate semester.
2. Be within nine units of completing all baccalaureate and all other undergraduate program objective requirements at the start of your final undergraduate semester.
3. Take no more than nine units of 400/500/600-level courses for graduate credit.
4. Enroll in no more than a total of 15 units for the semester.

Submit your Petition for Graduate Credit ([https://www.csuchico.edu/graduatestudies/\\_assets/documents/forms-credit-undergraduate-units.pdf](https://www.csuchico.edu/graduatestudies/_assets/documents/forms-credit-undergraduate-units.pdf)) form to Graduate Studies no later than the end of the second week of the semester of your enrollment in the coursework. If you are requesting graduate credit in any 400- or 500-level courses, include the supplementary attachment signed by the course instructors to confirm that you will be held to graduate requirements in each 400/500-level course listed.

Once submitted, a preliminary review of your petition will be completed to determine if you are in compliance with the policy, and you will be notified if there are any initial problems. However, the final review and award of graduate credit cannot happen until after you have been cleared for the baccalaureate. At that time it will be confirmed that the requested units are in excess of the baccalaureate and that the policy requirements have been met. You will be notified of the outcome when the petition review has been completed.

If you fail to graduate at the end of the semester or summer session during which the excess units were taken, the units will not be awarded graduate credit. All approved excess units will be noted on the record.

However, inclusion of the units in a master's degree program is subject to approval by your graduate program advisors.

Note: Excess units can be noted for a credential objective by submission of a written request to the Office of the Registrar at the time of your clearance for the baccalaureate.

## Master's Degree Courses

While a graduate student is not prohibited from enrolling in courses at any level, only courses in the 400, 500, or 600 series may be counted towards a master's degree program. Courses numbered 400–498 and 500–598 are acceptable as credit towards a master's degree unless otherwise noted in the course description. Courses numbered 499 and 599 are not acceptable. Graduate students enrolled in 400/500-level courses will be held to more rigorous requirements than undergraduates and must earn a grade of C- or higher to count them towards their program. Courses numbered 600–699 are open only to master's degree students, with certain exceptions, and are defined as requiring "the identification of a theory or principle; the application of theory to new ideas, problems, and materials; extensive use of bibliographic and other resource materials with emphasis on primary sources of data; and demonstration of competence in the scholarly presentation of the results of independent study." At least 60 percent of the total units required for a master's degree program must be in stand-alone 600-level courses (those not scheduled with 400/500-level courses).

Any course to be counted towards a master's degree program must be acceptable for graduate credit by the discipline offering the course (i.e., a 400/500/600-level course that is not acceptable for a master's degree in its home department cannot be counted towards a master's degree in another discipline).

## Comprehensive Examination (696), Independent Study (697), and Master's Study (699)

No more than a combined total of 10 units of Comprehensive Examination (696), Independent Study (697), and Master's Study (699) may be included in a master's degree program. A maximum of three units of Comprehensive Examination (696) and six units of Master's Study (699) is allowed.

Independent Study (697), open to any postbaccalaureate student, is a course designated for a specific research project supervised by any authorized member of the faculty. Credit for an Independent Study (697) is controlled by the academic discipline offering the course, and the faculty member directing the study assigns either a letter grade or a CR/NC (credit/no credit) grade when the course is completed. You may receive either an RP (report in progress) or an I (incomplete) for a 697 course that is not completed in the semester of enrollment. You must complete course requirements and have the RP or I replaced with either a letter grade or a CR within one year of the date of the original grade assignment or a grade of IC (incomplete charged) or NC will be assigned.

Comprehensive Examination (696) is a course designated in some graduate programs to review and synthesize the major theories, themes, and concepts of the discipline or program, culminating in the completion of the comprehensive examination required for the degree. In programs that offer the Comprehensive Examination course, a maximum of three units of 696 credit may be awarded, and a CR/NC grade is assigned.

Master's Study (699) is separated into a thesis and supporting research (offered as 699T for 1.0 to 6.0 units) or a project as defined by the individual department (offered as 699P for 1.0 to 6.0 units). In programs, course descriptions, and policy discussions, the 699 may be referred to without distinction as a thesis or project.

Enrollment in the 699 course is supervised by the chair of your graduate advisory committee, and 1.0 to 6.0 units of Master's Study credit will be received for the completion of a thesis or project and the supporting research for the topic. The number of units awarded is determined by your academic department. However, in no case may you enroll in, or receive credit for, more units of 699 than are required for your program. Enrollment in 699 is required if you are completing a thesis or project. The course may not be taken through Open University and may be taken as Special Session credit only in self-support programs offered through Professional & Continuing Education (<http://rce.csuchico.edu/>). Normally, enrollment in 699 is limited to classified students or candidates in a master's degree program, although restrictions vary among departments. All 699 courses are assigned a grade of RP until all degree requirements are successfully completed, and a grade of CR is assigned at that time.

An RP assigned to a 699 course must be replaced with a CR within the time period allowed for the completion of the master's degree. Failure to complete the work within the specified time period will result in a grade of NC.

## Applying for Graduation and Participation in Commencement

Graduation application materials, information, and instructions are available for master's degree candidates using the Master's Checklist for Graduation ([https://www.csuchico.edu/graduatestudies/\\_assets/documents/forms-checklist-degree-requirements.pdf](https://www.csuchico.edu/graduatestudies/_assets/documents/forms-checklist-degree-requirements.pdf)). You must apply for graduation and complete the culminating activity for your master's degree program by the applicable deadlines listed in the Academic Calendar (<https://www.csuchico.edu/apss/calendar/index.shtml/>).

It is your responsibility to meet all University and departmental requirements as well as administrative deadlines for graduation. A well-planned course of study and a clear understanding of the requirements will help to avoid last-semester problems and graduation delays.

A Commencement ceremony for master's graduates is held once a year at the end of the spring semester. You are eligible to participate in the ceremony if you graduated at the end of the previous summer session or fall semester, or if you will graduate at the completion of the spring semester.

## Graduation with Distinction/Outstanding Thesis and Project Awards

It is possible to receive the master's degree with distinction by maintaining a 3.9 grade point average for all approved program coursework and satisfying criteria established by the graduate committee of the program offering the degree. Upon recommendation of the appropriate graduate coordinator, an academic dean may award graduation with distinction to a student in their college who has a program grade point average below 3.9. Students graduating with distinction are recognized in the commencement program and receive a special diploma; the notation "with distinction" is posted with the degree on the transcript.

An Outstanding Thesis Award, initiated in 1988, and an Outstanding Project Award, initiated in 1991, allow special recognition of one thesis and one project each year. The outstanding thesis may be submitted to the Distinguished Thesis competition sponsored by the Western Association of Graduate Schools.

## Library Privileges for Graduate Students

The following privileges are granted to graduate students:

1. The loan period for graduate students is five weeks (35 days).
2. As a currently enrolled graduate student with a valid ID, you have borrowing privileges at any other California State University library. Mutual library privileges are subject to the regulations of the lending library, and Chico State ID cards are honored at the discretion of the lending library.
3. You may reserve one of the lockers that are available in the library for graduate students by making application at the Circulation Desk and paying a refundable deposit and a service fee.

## Maximum Course Load

Master's degree students may not register for more than 18 units of coursework in any semester without the approval of Graduate Studies. The typical master's degree requires two years for completion, and it is strongly recommended that master's degree students register for no more than 12 units each semester. Students pursuing a credential or certificate are held to the same enrollment limitations as undergraduate students.

## Repeating Courses with Forgiveness

Once you have a bachelor's degree, you may not raise your undergraduate grade point average by repeating a course originally taken as an undergraduate. However, you may petition and be approved to repeat postbaccalaureate coursework with forgiveness of the original grade under the stipulations of the Repeat with Forgiveness policies that apply to graduate and postbaccalaureate students. Refer to Repeating Courses ([https://catalog.csuchico.edu/academic-standards-policies/academic-policies-regulations/#Repeating\\_Courses](https://catalog.csuchico.edu/academic-standards-policies/academic-policies-regulations/#Repeating_Courses)) in the Academic Policies and Regulations section.

## Master's Degree Program Time Limit

You must complete all requirements for a master's degree no later than five or seven years from the end of the semester of enrollment in the oldest course on the approved program. Consult the academic program information for your discipline in this catalog to determine the time limit applicable to your program.

In special circumstances, an extension of the program time limit may be granted to a maximum of no more than two additional years. The extension may require taking additional coursework and dropping expired courses from the approved program, or validating expired coursework. The approval for the extension and the duration of the extension are determined by the petitioner's graduate advisory committee, the departmental graduate coordinator, and Graduate Studies, in that order.

## Validation of Expired Coursework

In conjunction with an approved extension of the time limit for completing a master's degree, expired courses must be validated by registration, examination, or other appropriate means. Expired courses are those taken five years or more prior to the date of graduating with the master's degree, or seven years or more prior to that date for those

programs under a seven-year time limit. A request for an extension and permission to validate credit must be approved by your graduate advisory committee, your graduate coordinator, and Graduate Studies (in that order) before you begin validation.

Validation by registration requires you to enroll in the expired courses as an auditor and complete all assigned work. The instructor of each course will notify Graduate Studies of your satisfactory completion of course requirements. Validation by examination requires the successful completion of a written examination or report covering the essential materials of the course. The instructor will file in Graduate Studies the final report or examination together with a written statement that it satisfactorily demonstrates current knowledge of course content. The report or examination will be kept on record until you receive the master's degree.

## Specifications for Master's Theses and Projects

Preparation of master's theses and projects is governed by guidelines established by the Graduate Council and available in A Guide to Graduate Studies: Policies, Procedures, & Format ([https://www.csuchico.edu/graduatestudies/\\_assets/documents/a-guide-to-graduate-studies-policies-procedures-and-format.pdf](https://www.csuchico.edu/graduatestudies/_assets/documents/a-guide-to-graduate-studies-policies-procedures-and-format.pdf)) and on the Graduate Studies website at the Grad Thesis or Project (<https://www.csuchico.edu/graduatestudies/current-students/thesis-project/index.shtml/>) link. We urge you to review these guidelines before beginning work on a thesis or project. Questions concerning thesis or project specifications should be directed to the graduate research and writing coordinator (<https://www.csuchico.edu/graduatestudies/advising/index.shtml/>) in Graduate Studies. Failure to follow the prescribed regulations may delay your graduation.

## Research with Human Participants or Animals

All research projects that involve human participants must be reviewed for adherence to ethical guidelines as outlined in departmental and University policies (EM 23-030 (<https://www.csuchico.edu/pres/em/2023/23-030.shtml/>)). No research involving human subjects will be conducted until a review of the project has been carried out and written approval given. All activity with animals must adhere to the guidelines outlined in the University Animal Welfare Policy (EM 23-031 (<https://www.csuchico.edu/pres/em/2023/23-031.shtml/>)). Guidelines on the use of human or animal subjects are available from Chico State Enterprises (<https://www.csuchico.edu/cse/>).

## Transfer and Special Session Credit

At the discretion of the academic program, a maximum of 30 percent of the units counted toward the degree requirements may be special session credit earned in non-matriculated status combined with all postbaccalaureate transfer coursework. This applies to special session credit earned through Open University, or in extended education courses offered for academic credit through Professional & Continuing Education, and provided that the special session and transfer coursework have not been counted toward any previous degree.

Transfer coursework may be considered for inclusion in your program at Chico State if the school granting the credit is regionally accredited and would accept the work for graduate credit toward its own advanced degree programs. If you have transfer coursework or special session credit earned in non-matriculated status that you would like to use as part

of your approved master's degree program, you should discuss it with both your graduate coordinator and an evaluator in Graduate Studies at the time that you develop your program. Any transfer or special session credit used to meet master's degree requirements is subject to the program time limit. (Note: Neither correspondence courses nor University of California Extension coursework may be applied toward a master's degree.)