

Requirements for Master's Degrees

(This policy statement supersedes PS 70-11, 70-25, 73-24, 75-13, 78-38, 85-18, 92-10, and 05-08)

This policy statement was recommended by the Academic Senate on March 6, 2014
and approved by the President on March 13, 2014.

Applicants with a baccalaureate degree may gain admission to CSULB as a graduate student with either conditionally classified or classified status. Once admitted to CSULB in a graduate degree program, a student retains catalog rights for both the general university requirements and the specific requirements of the degree program unless the student breaks continuous enrollment. Breaking continuous enrollment severs catalog rights for both the university and program.

The receipt of a master's degree involves four major steps:

1. Admission to CSULB and the academic unit granting the degree (department, college, etc.) as either a conditionally classified or classified graduate student;
2. Completion of the requirements to achieve classified status if admitted in conditionally classified status;
3. Preparation of a program of study and advancement to candidacy; and
4. Fulfillment of all remaining requirements for the degree, major, and option, if any, resulting in graduation.

1.0 ADMISSION TO THE MASTER'S DEGREE

- 1.1 Applicants must meet the minimum university requirements for admission as well as the standards established by the program. Exceptions to the minimum university requirements can only be granted by the Dean of Graduate Studies based on the recommendation of the program faculty. The offer of admission may be 'provisional' if requirements are in progress at the time of admission that must be completed prior to enrollment in the program (e.g., earning a Baccalaureate degree). Failure to meet the terms of the admission offer may result in the rescission of the offer.
- 1.2 Admission to Classified Standing: Applicants who satisfactorily meet the professional, personal, scholastic, and other standards for admission to the graduate degree curriculum, including qualifying examinations, are admitted with a Graduate Standing of "Classified."
- 1.3 Admission to Conditionally Classified Standing: Applicants who show promise of success but who have deficiencies in prerequisite preparation which, in the opinion of the program faculty, can be met by specified additional preparation, including qualifying examinations, may be offered admission with a Graduation Standing of "Conditionally Classified" on a space available basis. The academic unit granting the degree must notify the applicant of the specific preparation required including minimum grades and the time frame for completion within two weeks of the University offer of admission. Prerequisites should normally be completed in two semesters. Requests to allow a student longer than two semesters must be approved in advance by the Dean of Graduate Studies.
- 1.4 Completion of the requirements to Achieve Classified Standing: Academic unit(s) granting the degree(s) are required to monitor the progress of students in "Conditionally Classified" status each term. Upon the successful completion of the identified preparation, the academic unit granting the degree must notify Enrollment Services and the student that they have earned a Graduate Standing of "Classified." If the student fails to complete the required preparation within the timeframe established, the student may be immediately dismissed from the program. The academic unit granting the degree may grant additional time based on special circumstances with the approval of the Dean of Graduate Studies. The academic unit granting the degree must notify the student and Enrollment Services of the decision to dismiss for failure to achieve "Classified Standing" in a timely manner.

2.0 GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR MASTER'S DEGREES

In addition to whatever additional requirements a particular degree program has, all candidates for a master's degree must complete the requirements listed below:

- 2.1 Maintain a cumulative, graduate, grade-point average of 3.0 calculated on all upper-division and graduate-level coursework attempted by the candidate at CSULB after completion of a baccalaureate degree. Exceptions to the 3.0 cumulative, graduate, grade-point average may be made only on the recommendation of both the departmental faculty offering the degree and the college dean or designee and approval by the dean of graduate studies or designee.
- 2.2 Maintain at least a 3.0 average in all the courses listed on the program of study.
- 2.3 Obtain a minimum grade of C for a course to count in a program of study. Academic unit(s) granting the degree(s) may require higher minimum grades for specifically indicated courses. A student may retake a course once in order to achieve a minimum grade. A grade for a course taken the second time may satisfy a minimum grade requirement but shall not replace the grade previously earned in the course on the student's transcript.
- 2.4 Make progress towards timely completion of the degree as determined by any milestones that the academic unit granting the degree may have established in writing and communicated to its students. Students failing to make satisfactory progress may be placed on administrative academic probation. Department Chairs or Associate Deans must notify students in writing or via email that they have been placed on administrative academic probation.
- 2.5 Complete all required courses on the program of study, which must contain a minimum of 30 units in upper-division and graduate courses. Some degree programs require additional units. Student teaching may not be included in any master's degree program.
- 2.6 Complete at least seventy percent (70%) of the required units in the degree program at CSULB in matriculated status or as approved graduate credit earned as a senior. At the option of the department offering a master's degree, a graduate student may use credit taken at CSULB in non-matriculated status or approved transfer credit toward up to thirty percent (30%) of the units of the program of study. Units applied towards a previous undergraduate degree cannot be transferred for credit towards a master's degree. The academic unit granting the degree may waive units and course requirements provided the minimum thirty-unit requirement is met in accordance with Title V.
- 2.7 Complete at least seventy percent (70%) of the minimum units required for the program of study in courses at the 500 and 600 levels, including double-numbered courses (400/500). At least fifty percent (50%) of the units required for the degree shall be in courses organized primarily for graduate students.
- 2.8 Complete a thesis or project subject to all requisite approvals or pass a final, comprehensive examination. Some programs require both a final comprehensive examination and either a thesis or project. Others allow students a choice between a thesis option and a non-thesis, comprehensive examination option. Failure of either the comprehensive examination or thesis/project requirement is failure of both options. In other words, a student failing the comprehensive examination may not proceed to the thesis or project option or vice versa. Once a student has completed a semester of enrollment toward fulfillment of either the comprehensive examination or thesis option, the student may not change from one option to the other without the approval of the graduate advisor, the department chair, and the appropriate dean or designee.
- 2.9 Complete all requirements of the degree program within seven (7) years of the date the student initiated the program (i.e., the date [semester] when the student first completed a course appearing on the student's program of study). The dean of graduate studies or designee may grant an exception to this requirement if warranted by individual circumstances and if the student re-validates the outdated work by re-taking the course, passing a comprehensive examination in the relevant course or subject field work, or fulfilling such other demonstrations of competence as may be prescribed by the department in its approved policy on revalidation.
- 2.10 Maintain continuous enrollment every spring and fall semester by registering in a course or in GS 700 or having received an approved educational leave. Registration in GS 700 is restricted to graduate students who have completed all course work, have been advanced to candidacy, and have departmental approval. Registration in a course or in GS 700 also is required in winter or summer session if that is when a student plans to graduate. Registration in GS 700 is CR/NC only.

3.0 THE PROGRAM OF STUDY

- 3.1 A student must consult with the graduate advisor for the degree program to prepare a tentative program of study. After completing prerequisites and other requirements, the student must formulate an official program of study and then apply for advancement to candidacy.
- 3.2 Many academic units granting degrees will assign the student a faculty advisor with whom the student must also consult about preparing a program of study; other departments utilize their graduate advisors for this purpose. Either the faculty or graduate advisor will assist the student in preparing a program of study. Many academic units granting degrees will also require a special committee to advise a student, especially when either a thesis or project is involved. The student's program of study must be approved by the academic unit granting the degree and the college dean or designee. Once approved, a student's program of study may not be changed without the express consent of all parties involved.

4.0 ADVANCEMENT TO CANDIDACY

- 4.1 The requirements for advancement to candidacy are:
 - 4.1.1 Attainment of classified status as a student in a graduate program at CSULB;
 - 4.1.2 Fulfillment of the Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR);
 - 4.1.3 Approval by the student's department and college of a program of study (see above);
 - 4.1.4 Completion with a minimum GPA of 3.0 of at least six units of courses required on the student's program of study;
 - 4.1.5 A cumulative, graduate, grade-point average of at least 3.0 calculated on all upper-division and graduate-level coursework attempted by the student at CSULB after completion of a baccalaureate degree;
 - 4.1.6 Satisfactory completion of any assessments of competence that the department may require.
- 4.2 CSULB will advance to candidacy all graduate students when the above requirements have been successfully completed. In most instances, advancement to candidacy should occur no later than the end of the second semester of matriculation and must occur no later than one semester or session prior to the semester or session in which the student expects to graduate. It must occur prior to a student filing a request to graduate with Enrollment Services. Normally, a student is eligible and should file for advancement to candidacy for the semester immediately after fulfilling the requirements for advancement to candidacy listed above. All students must consult with their graduate advisor regarding advancement to candidacy as well as to determine any departmental requirements to graduate from CSULB.
- 4.3 An approved graduate student program remains in effect so long as a candidate is making satisfactory progress and does not withdraw from CSULB. To ensure minimum satisfactory progress toward the degree objective, the student must enroll every fall and spring semester or be on approved educational leave and complete all degree requirements within seven years after completion of the first course on the student's program. See also information about Graduate Studies 700 above (Section 2.10).
- 4.4 Prior to advancement to candidacy the student may change degree program or options within the same department with faculty approval. Students wishing to change to a degree program in a different department must file a new application for admission. If admitted to the new discipline, the student must then follow all the steps indicated above for obtaining approval of a new student program and advancement to candidacy.
- 4.5 A student entering military service after having been admitted to candidacy for an advanced degree will be considered as not having withdrawn from candidacy, provided that the student is enlisted or called to active duty during a semester in which he/she is enrolled or not more than one semester thereafter and then enrolls in courses toward her/his degree within one calendar year of the date of her/his release from service.

5.0 FINAL COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

- 5.1 Each academic unit granting degrees requiring a final, comprehensive examination determines the content of the examination. Such examinations may be written or oral or both. A faculty committee shall represent the academic unit granting the degree in preparing the questions, administering the examination, and scoring the results. Through the comprehensive examination, the faculty provides an opportunity for the master's degree candidate to demonstrate analytic ability and knowledge of the discipline. Students may not enroll for courses in preparation for the comprehensive examination or take the comprehensive examination unless they have been advanced to candidacy for the master's degree or unless advancement to candidacy will occur in the semester in which the enrollment takes place.
- 5.2 An academic unit granting the degree may allow a candidate who has failed the final, comprehensive examination to take it a second time, and the student should contact the departmental graduate advisor for specific procedures for the second attempt. In order for CSULB to award a candidate the master's degree for a particular semester, the department must report the results of the comprehensive examination to Enrollment Services prior to the end of that semester.

6.0 THESES AND PROJECTS

- 6.1. A separate policy statement details the requirements for theses and projects.
- 6.2. A student may enroll for thesis or project units (courses usually numbered 698 or 699) only when that student has attained candidacy status for the degree or when advancement to candidacy will occur in the semester of initial enrollment in thesis or project units. CSULB will award a minimum of three and a maximum of six semester units for the successful completion of a thesis or project.
- 6.3. All thesis or project units must be specified as either credit/no credit only or letter grade only by the department. If a department selects the letter grade option the student must earn at least a B.

7.0 CONCURRENT MASTER'S DEGREE

- 7.1 Currently matriculated, post-baccalaureate students may enroll concurrently in a second master's degrees program. Rather than sequentially completing one degree first and then the other, the student's time and the university's resources may be conserved by arrangements that permit the student to proceed in a coordinated way toward completion of the two graduate degree programs simultaneously. The two degree programs may reside in separate academic units or the same academic unit. To protect the integrity of the university's degrees, the following conditions must be satisfied to award concurrent master's degrees:
 - 7.1.1 The student must complete all prerequisites for the concurrent master's degree prior to seeking approval to declare that concurrent master's degree;
 - 7.1.2 A student wishing to pursue a concurrent master's degree must first seek the approval of the graduate academic unit granting the student's first master's degree program to declare the additional master's program;
 - 7.1.3 If the student's current graduate academic unit agrees that the additional master's may be appropriate and feasible the academic unit(s) granting the degrees would collaborate to develop a plan to allow completion of both degrees;
 - 7.1.4 Each degree in a concurrent program must meet the 30 unique unit minimum. Units beyond the 30 unique unit minimum may be shared between concurrent degrees.
- 7.2 If the academic unit(s) granting the degrees are successful in developing a plan to allow completion of both degrees, the Dean of Graduate Studies or his/her designee(s) must approve the plan before the student can begin work on the additional master's degree while still enrolled in the initial degree program. The decision whether to approve the student's request should be based on:
 - 7.2.1 The extent to which the additional master's program would form a coherent intellectual whole with the initial program;
 - 7.2.2 The number of units already completed in the initial master's degree program and student's academic performance in that coursework;
 - 7.2.3 The feasibility of the plan to complete the degrees in a timely manner (i.e., without violating either the "seven-year rule" or any timely completion policies of individual master's degree programs);
 - 7.2.4 Any additional criteria the Dean of Graduate Studies finds relevant to the decision in any particular case.

- 7.3 The student is considered formally admitted only to the initial master's degree program. If the student wishes to discontinue the initial program in favor of the added program they must reapply to the university and the plan to complete both degrees would no longer be valid.
- 7.4 Regardless of the number of units approved for "sharing" between two master's degree programs, students must complete distinct culminating activities for each degree (e.g., a comprehensive exam for each of the two degrees; two different theses or projects; one comprehensive exam and one thesis or project).
- 7.5 Academic units that believe pursuing concurrent master's degrees would be beneficial to their students may establish formal cooperation agreements with the approval of the Dean of Graduate Studies. Students would still need to fulfill the requirements listed above but the process for entering the additional master's program would be streamlined.

8.0 SECOND MASTER'S DEGREE

- 8.1 Students who have graduated with or who are about to graduate with a master's degree from CSULB or any other regionally accredited university may apply for a second master's degree in a different program.
- 8.2 CSULB will grant advancement to candidacy for the second degree only after the first degree has been awarded. All candidates for a second master's degree must meet the following requirements:
 - 8.2.1 Meet all admission requirements of CSULB and the academic unit granting the degree;
 - 8.2.2 Complete all general requirements for a master's degree at CSULB not already completed as well as all specific requirements for the new degree program. Units applied towards a previously completed degree cannot be transferred for credit towards a second master's degree. The academic unit(s) granting the degrees may waive units and course requirements provided the minimum 30 unique unit requirement is met.
 - 8.2.3 Earn, after the awarding of the first master's degree, a minimum of 21 units of graduate residence credit at CSULB, including the minimum of 500 and 600 series units mandated by the academic unit in which the student is earning the second master's degree.

EFFECTIVE: Fall 2014