

Graduate Student Handbook
Policies and Guidelines
AY 2026 - 2027

Contents

WELCOME TO CAL POLY	3
INTRODUCTION	3
GRADUATE PROGRAM ADVISING.....	3
FACULTY ADVISOR.....	3
GRADUATE COORDINATOR.....	4
ACADEMIC ADVISOR.....	4
REGISTRATION AND TUITION.....	4
STATE-SUPPORT PROGRAMS	4
SELF-SUPPORT PROGRAMS.....	4
REGISTRATION AND FULL-TIME STATUS	5
ENROLLMENT IN GRADUATE COURSES.....	5
DEGREE REQUIREMENTS	5
ACADEMIC POLICIES	5
CONTINUOUS ENROLLMENT	5
DISCONTINUATION	6
LEAVES OF ABSENCE	6
ACADEMIC STANDING/GRADING	6
GRADE POINT CALCULATION FOR GRADUATE DEGREE	7
ACADEMIC NOTICE	7
PROCESS TO DEGREE COMPLETION	7
ADVANCEMENT TO CANDIDACY (ATC)	8
INTENT TO COMPLETE DEGREE.....	8
FINAL CURRICULUM PLAN.....	8
MASTER'S CULMINATING EXPERIENCE APPROVAL FORM (ALL PROGRAMS)	9
CULMINATING EXPERIENCES: THESIS, PROJECT, AND/OR EXAM	9

CULMINATING EXPERIENCE.....	9
EXPORT LAW COMPLIANCE.....	9
THESIS GUIDANCE.....	10
COMMENCEMENT.....	10
ACADEMIC DISTINCTIONS & AWARDS.....	11
GRADUATION WITH DISTINCTION.....	11
GRADUATE IMPACT AWARD	11
OUTSTANDING GRADUATE STUDENT AWARDS	11
ACADEMIC RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES.....	12
ACADEMIC DISHONESTY	12
PLAGIARISM.....	12
GRADUATE PROGRAMS	13
BLENDED DEGREE PROGRAMS.....	13
ADMISSIONS TO A BLENDED PROGRAM	13
TRANSITION TO GRADUATE STANDING	14
DOUBLE COUNTING UNITS	14
SENIOR PROJECT REQUIREMENTS.....	14
IMPACT ON FINANCIAL AID	14
PROGRESS-TO-DEGREE ON CAL POLY PORTAL.....	14
GRADUATE STANDING FOR MINIMUM OF 2 TERMS	14
ACADEMIC UNITS REQUIRED FOR COMPLETION.....	14
PROCESS TO AWARD BOTH DEGREES	15
CROSS DISCIPLINARY BLENDED APPLICANTS.....	15
RETURNING BLENDED STUDENTS	15
CERTIFICATES.....	15
CAL POLY’S PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY (AS-1012-26)	16
CAL POLY INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY POLICY	16

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.

[A list of some common terms and phrases](#) you will hear and use during your time at Cal Poly.

INTRODUCTION

The California Polytechnic State University has more than 35 graduate programs. These programs offer master's degrees, Post-baccalaureate Credentials (Education), and Graduate and Professional Certificates.

This handbook is intended to help guide students through the processes as well as the policies that must be followed to successfully complete graduate work at Cal Poly. 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. 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, Graduate Coordinators, and the Graduate Education academic advisor share the responsibility for advising master's degree students throughout their graduate career.

FACULTY ADVISOR

Faculty advisors play a central role in supporting master's students by guiding and encouraging them to reach their scholarly potential while helping them remain in compliance with [University policies and requirements for Master's education](#). Advisors are expected to foster an environment that supports students' research and intellectual development, provide ongoing feedback on progress, and clearly communicate the standards and expectations associated with graduate study. Faculty advisors assist in

course selection for degree elective options, determining culminating experience topic and scope when applicable, and serving as a mentor.

GRADUATE COORDINATOR

Graduate Coordinator is the faculty member who leads and manages a specific graduate program. They are responsible for overseeing the graduate program, monitoring academic standards and progress, coordinating curriculum and course offerings with the department, and supporting students through administrative processes. Coordinators can assist with advising students' situations, including academic decisions or conflicts. They are the link between Graduate Education and the program.

ACADEMIC ADVISOR

The Graduate Education academic advisor works with all graduate students regardless of program. They guide students through university policies and procedures, assisting in navigating life challenges, staying on track academically, and connecting students to academic resources.

Additional information on thesis advising can be found in the thesis advising handbook (link coming soon).

Students are encouraged to maintain personal copies of transcripts and other records related to their undergraduate and graduate coursework have those materials when seeking advising.

REGISTRATION AND TUITION

For guidance on what courses to register for, students should connect with their [graduate coordinator](#). Registration for classes is completed through a student's Cal Poly Portal, and the process depends on whether the student's program is classified as state-support or self-support.

All programs are state support, except the following: MS Fire Protection Engineering, MS Business Analytics, MS Quantitative Economics, and MS Transportation and Engineering Management. Additionally, all graduate and professional certificate programs are self-supported.

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

STATE-SUPPORT PROGRAMS

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.

Information on how to register for classes can be found with the [Office of the Registrar](#).

Tuition and fees information can be found each year with [Student Accounts](#).

SELF-SUPPORT PROGRAMS

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.

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, Professional, and Continuing Education](#).

REGISTRATION AND FULL-TIME STATUS

For graduate students, full-time status is 9 units per term. However, graduate students may enroll in up to 15 units during their Cal Poly registration rotation period. 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 COURSES

To enroll in a 5000-level graduate course, a student must have post-baccalaureate standing, graduate standing, or the permission of the instructor. Most undergraduate prerequisites are waived for 5000-level courses. Please note that prerequisites are not waived for 4000-level courses; the student may need to obtain a permission number from the instructor or department administrator to enroll in 4000-level courses.

Information on how to register for classes can be found with the [Office of the Registrar](#).

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

The Cal Poly Catalog is the official source for all degree requirements and policies that govern your degree of progress and requirements. Review the [degree requirements](#) for Graduate Programs in the catalog.

ACADEMIC POLICIES

All of the requirements and academic responsibilities that apply to graduate students can be found in the [Cal Poly Catalog](#). Graduate students are ultimately responsible for ensuring that they are following these policies. Some commonly utilized policies are highlighted below:

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 and Spring terms each year. Failure to maintain continuous enrollment will result in a student being [discontinued](#). 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. There is no maximum (or cap) on the number of terms that students will be required to maintain continuous enrollment.

Continuous enrollment may be met by enrolling in regular academic courses, being on an approved [leave of absence](#), or enrolling in GS S5597.

For additional information, including how to register for GS S5597, visit [Continuous Enrollment](#).

DISCONTINUATION

Matriculated students who have not registered while admitted into a graduate program (excluding summer term) and who have not been on an approved Leave of Absence will be discontinued and will not be allowed to enroll. For information on how to reapply, please visit [Returning Students](#).

LEAVES OF ABSENCE

Students are permitted to take a Leave of Absence (LOA) with a written request and approval by campus officials. A student may not request a Leave of Absence for their first term (their term of admission or, for blended students, the term starting graduate standing). Students may request up to 2 terms off for a Leave of Absence (not including summer) with an exception for U.S. Military service. Students should speak directly with the Graduate Education Academic Advisor to request a one academic year extension to their existing LOA (for up to a total of 4 semesters).

An LOA indicates that a student is not subject to discontinuation and remains active in the university. However, Leave of Absence 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 and may be held to any new curriculum requirements which may be in effect.

Students must be eligible to enroll in classes the term their leave begins, have attended Cal Poly in Graduate Standing for at least one term for which they earned units or received “W” grades, and have dropped or withdrawn from all classes for the term their leave begins.

Process:

- Discuss taking a leave with appropriate faculty/thesis/project advisor and Graduate Coordinator.
- Discuss LOA impacts on financial aid (if applicable) with the Financial Aid Office.
- Initiate the appropriate LOA form using the link found in the [Drops, Withdrawal, and Leaves website](#).
 - When the form request is completed, a blank copy of the appropriate LOA form will be sent to the student's Cal Poly email address.
- Complete the LOA form.
- Check Cal Poly email regularly for follow up questions or information that may be requested, or until the request decision has been made.

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 GPA calculation. Alternatively, if the course is not required for the graduate program, it can be 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.

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-999-26). Graduate students may elect to take courses that are not part of their master's degree 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 of grade from the overall GPA calculation on the student's transcript, both letter grades and units will be factored into the GPA. The final transcript will reflect the earned GPA of all courses taken while in Post-baccalaureate standing.

ACADEMIC NOTICE

Students enrolled in a graduate degree program (conditionally classified or classified standing) and students in post-baccalaureate classified to pursue a credential program shall be subject to academic notice if the term grade point average, Cal Poly post-baccalaureate cumulative grade point average, and/or post-baccalaureate higher education grade point average drops below 3.000 ([AS-983-24](#)). Post-baccalaureate unclassified students (has not been admitted to either a credential or graduate degree program) shall be subject to academic notice for failure to maintain a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.5 in all units attempted subsequent to admission to post-baccalaureate standing.

Students placed on Academic Notice will receive notification from Graduate Education, in addition to a marker being placed on the Poly Profile. Students may be required to complete a Student Success Contract set by the Graduate Education Office depending on their academic situation.

See the [University Catalog](#) for additional policies on Academic Disqualification, Administrative Probation, Administrative Disqualification, and Dismissal from University.

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 administrative tasks. 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. 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.

ADVANCEMENT TO CANDIDACY (ATC)

(Title 5, Article 7, 40510a & 41011) The ATC 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. It also serves to record the following:

- Determine culminating experience: Thesis, Project, or Exam.
- Identify members of the evaluation committee as needed. Check with your Graduate Coordinator to determine if there are any required College-specific committee members for approval or documentation.
- The advancement to candidacy process is also where students may request to apply prematriculated units to their program curriculum.

INTENT TO COMPLETE DEGREE

- Students must submit an Intent to Complete Degree to indicate their intent to have their degree evaluated. Submitting this form places you on the list for degree evaluation after the end of the term and allows the Graduate Education Office to review your record and notify you of any remaining requirements. It also ensures the Registrar's Office includes you in the evaluation process for your requested term.
 - Failure to submit this form will prevent the university from evaluating your degree or confirming completion of requirements.

FINAL CURRICULUM PLAN

- The Final Curriculum Plan outlines the coursework that will be evaluated for application to your degree. This document is reviewed manually by an evaluator to determine whether degree requirements have been met, so accuracy is essential. This document is also used to calculate the final master's degree GPA.
- Every class listed on the Final Curriculum Plan, including repeat or C/NC courses, must be following the guidelines set in the [Academic Standing/Grading](#) section.

Please review the following to determine if you need to complete a Final Curriculum Plan. If you do not fall into one of the categories listed below, you do not need to complete one.

All Blended Pathway Students	Must complete the Final Curriculum Plan.
Traditional student that started between Fall 2022 and Summer 2026.	Must complete a Final Curriculum Plan <i>only</i> if you were in one of the following programs: • Aerospace Engineering • Agriculture • Architectural Engineering

	• Architecture (Suspended) • Biology • Biomedical Engineering • City & Regional Planning • Civil & Environmental Engineering • Computer Science • Electrical Engineering • Engineering Management • Environmental Science • Mathematics • Mechanical Engineering • Nutrition • Polymers & Coatings • Public Policy • Quantitative Economics • Statistics • Transportation & Engineering Management
Any student that started prior to Fall 2022.	Must complete the Final Study Plan.

MASTER'S CULMINATING EXPERIENCE APPROVAL FORM (ALL PROGRAMS)

The Culminating Experience Approval Form acts as the record of completion for your culminating experience work. The date listed on this form will determine the term for which your degree(s) will be awarded.

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.). Review [catalog program requirements](#) on what options are available for each master's degree.

Review [catalog descriptions](#) for culminating experience/research definitions and policy requirements.

EXPORT LAW COMPLIANCE

The Research Integrity and Compliance (RIC) team of the Office of Research will work with all faculty advisors of theses and projects to ensure Cal Poly is in compliance with federal export laws. Under Federal Law, access to export-controlled information, data, technology, and/or materials by a non-U.S. Person (as defined by federal law) is not permitted without an export license, unless an authorized license exception applies. Categories of controlled items can include advanced computing, electronics, telecommunications, navigation, avionics, and chemicals. The types of equipment and information involved in graduate research (laboratory or thesis) will determine the potential likelihood of being subject to export restrictions (especially Engineering, Science/Math, Agriculture). Faculty and students

must consult with RIC at exportcompliance@calpoly.edu to make this determination. Graduate student advisors in categories with a high likelihood of export restricted data/technology/material/equipment should work with their College Dean's Office and RIC to determine if and how a project/thesis may proceed. The goal is to strengthen research and thesis activity by assuring that the campus takes proper steps to comply with federal export law, this can be accomplished with proper export review and, if needed, acquiring an export license or implementing technology control plans as necessary. 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

Introduction

A master's thesis is a substantial, independent research or creative project that represents the culmination of a student's graduate education. It demonstrates the student's ability to formulate a research question or creative objective, apply appropriate methodologies, analyze results, and communicate findings effectively.

Consistent with California State University (CSU) policy, a thesis is *the written product of a systematic study of a significant problem*. It identifies the problem, states major assumptions, explains the significance of the undertaking, describes the sources and methods used to gather information, analyzes the data, and presents a conclusion or recommendation. The finished product should demonstrate originality, critical and independent thinking, appropriate organization and format, clarity of purpose, and thorough documentation. In most programs, an oral defense of the thesis is required.

Theses vary significantly across disciplines. In the sciences and engineering, a thesis often involves experimental or computational research and follows a structured format (e.g., introduction, methods, results, discussion). In the humanities and social sciences, theses may emphasize critical analysis, theoretical frameworks, or qualitative research. In creative disciplines, a thesis may include a creative work accompanied by a written component that contextualizes the work.

Despite these differences, all theses share key characteristics: they represent a significant intellectual undertaking, require sustained effort over an extended period, and serve as the culminating experience for a master's degree. Regardless of format or discipline, the thesis should meet standards comparable to professional or scholarly publication within the field.

More information can be found in the thesis advising handbook: Coming soon.

COMMENCEMENT

Students who graduate within the academic year are eligible to participate in the Spring commencement ceremony. 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 DISTINCTIONS & AWARDS

Cal Poly recognizes exceptional academic achievement through the following distinctions and awards available to qualifying students. All graduate distinctions and awards:

GRADUATION WITH DISTINCTION

Graduation with Distinction will be determined by the Office of the Registrar only at the time of degree posting. It will NOT be noted or awarded at the Commencement Ceremonies. Instead, the designation will appear on a student's final transcript and diploma. The criterion for graduation with distinction is a grade point average of 3.75 or better in courses that count toward the master's degree.

GRADUATE IMPACT AWARD

The Graduate Impact Award is a program-level recognition that honors graduate students who demonstrate sustained academic excellence and meaningful contributions beyond standard degree requirements. Each academic program may recognize one to two students annually for this award.

Recipients of the Graduate Impact Award exemplify:

- **Academic Excellence:** sustained, exceptional academic achievement demonstrating intellectual rigor, depth of understanding, and mastery of their discipline
- **Significant Contribution Beyond Coursework:** meaningful contributions through research, creative activity, professional practice, leadership, or service with demonstrated impact beyond degree requirements
- **Outstanding Characteristics:** qualities such as initiative, integrity, innovation, resilience, collaboration, or other accomplishments that distinguish the student and elevate their program or college

Eligible students are master's degree candidates completing their degree during the current academic year with a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.75.

Recipients are recognized in Commencement materials and are also considered for the Outstanding Graduate Student Award at the College/School level.

OUTSTANDING GRADUATE STUDENT AWARDS

The Outstanding Graduate Student Award recognizes students who demonstrate the highest level of academic excellence and impactful contributions within their College/School.

An Outstanding Graduate Student Award is given to one student from each College/School (CAFES, CAED, CENG, CLA, COSAM, OCOB, and SOE). From the pool of Graduate Impact Award recipients, the Associate Dean of each College/School identifies one student to receive this award.

Eligible students must be master's degree candidates who have completed or will complete their degree requirements during the current academic year and meet the Graduate Impact Award criteria.

Final selections are submitted to the Graduate Education office. Recipients are recognized in Commencement materials.

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.

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](#).

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is presenting another person's or an AI system's ideas, words, or work as your own without proper acknowledgment or disclosure. This includes copying, closely paraphrasing, submitting work created by someone else or an AI tool, or using another person's or AI-generated projects or programs without giving appropriate credit.

Students are responsible for following each instructor's policy regarding the use of AI tools in coursework. Instructors will communicate whether AI use is permitted and, if so, how it must be disclosed. If no specific policy is provided, AI-generated content should be cited and acknowledged using the same standards required for another person's work.

Unauthorized use of AI to complete academic work may be considered cheating, while failing to disclose AI-generated content may be considered plagiarism. Depending on the instructor's guidelines, the use of AI may constitute plagiarism, cheating, or both.

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-1017-26, and [Campus Administrative Policy](#).

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](#).

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. Specific bachelor's degrees (and applied concentrations) are approved to match with specific master's degrees. Not all degrees have an approved pairing.

Blended Programs enable students completing a thesis/project in their Master's degree to align the objectives of their Master's culminating experience with those of their senior project. All Blended Programs must follow the policies outlined by the CSU Chancellor's Office and in Cal Poly Academic Senate Resolution AS-877-19.

ADMISSIONS 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 recommended by their department's Blended Program. The application approval process includes a degree completion plan that outlines a student's pathway to complete all blended degrees requirements (bachelor's and master's) while maintaining compliance with all blended and graduate policies.

Note that acceptance into a Blended Program does not constitute a change in the student's status. Only once the student has submitted a Post-baccalaureate 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. Application Approvals must be submitted and approved at least 1 term prior to starting the transition to Graduate Standing.

TRANSITION TO GRADUATE STANDING

Students admitted to the Blended Program will maintain their undergraduate status until they have completed 120 semester units (for high-unit bachelor's the threshold is equal to the number of units required by the bachelor's) that count toward both the bachelor's and master's degrees. At the beginning of the academic term in which the student will complete this unit count, the student is required to file a [Post-baccalaureate Change of Objective](#) (PBCO) form with the Graduate Education office. Once the form is processed, the student will transition to graduate standing the following term (excluding summer) and incur the appropriate increase in tuition and fees. Students must complete the Graduate Writing Requirement (GWR) and all bachelor's lower-division (1000/2000) requirements, including General Education, before transitioning to graduate status via the PBCO submission.

DOUBLE COUNTING UNITS

Not all Blended Programs allow double counting. Review graduate program [catalog description](#) on Blended Programs for allowances and rules.

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 standing.

GRADUATE STANDING FOR MINIMUM OF 2 TERMS All Blended students must be enrolled in curriculum at graduate status for a minimum of 2 terms before they are eligible to graduate.

ACADEMIC UNITS REQUIRED FOR COMPLETION Under Title V, up to 12 semester units of graduate level coursework that applied to their 120 baccalaureate units can double count towards the master's degree requirements, leaving at-minimum 18 additional semester units in the

master's degree program. Therefore, a minimum of 138 semester units (e.g., BS 120 + MS 30, subtracting 12 units double counted) are required in Blended Programs.

Cal Poly Academic Senate Resolution on double counting for Blended Program restricts double counting to only high unit programs, the limit being the excess of over 120 semester units.

PROCESS TO AWARD BOTH DEGREES

Students must submit the following forms to Graduate Education with the indicated approval signatures: Blended Pathway Application Approval, Blended Pathway Post-baccalaureate Change of Objective, Advancement to Candidacy, Intent to Complete Degree, Final Curriculum 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).

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 Post-baccalaureate 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. Review admissions information at [Returning Students](#).

CERTIFICATES

A certificate program offers post-baccalaureate 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. Graduate Certificates require students to be matriculated and Professional Certificates do not require matriculation. Please visit <https://extended.calpoly.edu/> for more information on Professional Certificate programs.

CAL POLY'S PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY (AS-1012-26)

Cal Poly recognizes the invaluable opportunity to reside, work, and aspire in California, a state that boasts a rich diversity of people, industry, ideas, and cultures. It is both a gift and a duty, then, to ensure that our intellectual community continues to reflect the diversity of this state and provide for the mental and physical wellbeing of our students, faculty, staff, guests, and families. As institutions committed to “educating both the head and the hand”, it is vital that we continue to embody spaces for critical inquiry, meaningful dialogue, the scientific method, and supporting one another with respect, kindness, and accountability. Civil rights activist, poet and humanitarian Audre Lorde (1934 – 1992) wrote: “You do not have to be me in order for us to fight alongside each other. I do not have to be you to recognize that our wars are the same. What we must do is commit ourselves to some future that can include each other and to work toward that future with the particular strengths of our individual identities. And in order to do this, we must allow each other our differences at the same time as we recognize our sameness” (Sister Outsider: Essays & Speeches, 1984, pg. 121). In this spirit, these Principles of Community underscore our hopes to cultivate an inclusive future, one guided by our differences and not despite them. Cal Poly (San Luis Obispo and Solano campus) commits to our Principles of Community and invite every individual to do the work individually and collectively to safeguard against the harms of ignorance, prejudice, fear, and hate. Our principles are:

1. We affirm the necessity of recognizing each individual's unique identity as integral to the mission of student success as defined by the CSU Framework for Student Success.¹
2. We are a community composed of individuals whose diversity can provide a foundation for growth, flourishing, and excellence.
3. We advocate for open and equitable access to educational experiences, learning, and development.
4. We believe that building a foundation for success is an active ongoing process and is therefore the responsibility of all community members; fostering such a community requires an approach grounded in equity in every decision, strategy, and action.
5. We acknowledge that our society inherits historical and ongoing biases, and we promote constructive strategies for addressing these biases based on research, data, and scholarship.
6. We avow that active participation and collaboration are central to addressing the issues facing our local, global communities and our educational mission.

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.