

POLICY ON MASTER'S DEGREES

This policy statement was recommended by the Academic Senate on March, 20, 2025, and approved by the President on April 11, 2025.
(Supersedes PS 14-01, 18-03, 70-11, 70-25, 73-24, 75-13, 78-38, 85-18, 92-10, and 05-08).

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Applicants with a baccalaureate degree may gain admission to CSULB as graduate students with either conditionally classified or classified status. Once admitted to CSULB in a graduate degree program, a student retains catalog rights for the term and year of admission 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.

Earning a master's degree involves several major steps:

- A. Admission to CSULB and the academic unit granting the degree (department, program, etc.) as either a conditionally classified or classified graduate student;
- B. If admitted in conditionally classified status, completion of the requirements to achieve classified status;
- C. Preparation and successful completion of a program of study;
- D. Advancement to candidacy;
- E. Successful completion of the coursework and culminating activity in the program of study; and
- F. If applicable, fulfillment of all remaining requirements for the degree and option.

2.0 ADMISSION TO THE MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAM

- 2.1 Applicants must meet the minimum university requirements for admission, as per Title 5, as well as the standards established by the program.
- 2.2 As per Title 5, the minimum requirements for admission are:

- A. The applicant holds an acceptable baccalaureate degree earned at an institution accredited by a regional accrediting association, or the applicant has completed equivalent academic preparation as determined by the appropriate campus authority (such as the body that verifies international degrees); and
 - B. The applicant has satisfied any *one* of the following three conditions:
 - (1) The applicant has attained a grade point average of at least 2.50 in an acceptable earned baccalaureate degree,
 - (2) The applicant has attained a grade point average of at least 2.50 in the last 60 semester units (90 quarter units) attempted;
 - (3) The applicant holds an acceptable post-baccalaureate degree earned at an institution accredited by a regional accrediting association.
 - C. And the applicant was in good standing at the last institution of higher education attended.
- 2.3 Program admissions decisions are under the purview of the program faculty. Program faculty may make admissions decisions on the basis of additional discipline-specific criteria. These criteria may be stricter than university minimum requirements.
- 2.4 Applicants who do not meet the university requirements may be admitted by special action upon receiving both the recommendation of program faculty and Dean of Graduate Studies (or designee). Admissions by special action are made on the basis of “acceptable evidence the applicant is judged...to possess sufficient academic, professional and other potential pertinent to the applicant's educational objectives to merit such action” (Title 5, Sect. 41001).
- 2.4.1 Applications will be administratively withdrawn if the documents required by university admissions (e.g., official transcripts, residency forms) are not submitted by the published deadlines.
- 2.4.2 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.
- 2.5 As per Title 5, applicants are admitted to Classified or Conditionally Classified Standing.
- 2.5.1 Admission to Classified Standing: Applicants who meet university minimum requirements for admission as well as applicable additional discipline-specific criteria for admission are admitted with a Graduate Standing of “Classified.”

2.5.2 Admission to Conditionally Classified Standing: Applicants who show promise of success with specified additional preparation, including qualifying examinations or prerequisite courses, may be offered admission at the discretion of program faculty with a Graduate Standing of “Conditionally Classified” on a space-available basis. The academic unit granting the degree must:

- A. 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 be completed in one year (e.g., a Fall admit should complete before the following Fall).
- B. Notify Enrollment Services and the student, upon the student’s successful completion of the specific preparation required, that they have earned Classified Standing;
- C. Notify Enrollment Services and the student if the student fails to complete the required preparation for “Classified Standing” within the timeframe established and if the academic unit decides to immediately dismiss the student from the program. The academic unit may grant additional time based on special circumstances with the approval of the Dean of Graduate Studies (or designee).

2.6 Graduate Admission Appeals: Graduate applicants may appeal their denial of admissions or withdrawal of the admissions application.

2.6.1 For an appeal to be considered, all relevant documentation that contains new, serious, and/or compelling information (including any completed or in-progress post-baccalaureate academic performance) or that demonstrates that an administrative error has taken place must be included with the appeal.

2.6.1.1 Applicants cannot appeal their position on a waitlist or being waitlisted.

2.6.1.2 Mistakes made by the applicant on an application are not grounds for a reversal of a decision.

2.6.2 Applicants appealing a residency decision shall contact the Residency Specialist in the Office of Admissions.

2.6.3 As per Title 3, appeals must be submitted no later than "15 business days from the date of denial of admissions notification" or date of withdrawal notification.

2.6.4 Appeals shall be submitted by the denied/withdrawn applicant using a CSULB Admissions Appeal Form through the CSULB Office of Admissions website.

2.6.4.1 On the CSULB Admissions Appeal Form, the appellant (the denied/withdrawn applicant) shall outline the reason(s) for appealing the decision and must provide supporting documentation.

- 2.6.5 Appeals for denials at the CSU level will be reviewed by CSULB Office of Admissions in consultation with the graduate program.
 - 2.6.5.1 Once the appeal is submitted, the Office of Admissions shall consult with the appropriate units (e.g., academic program, department and, as needed, the Dean of Graduate Studies or designee) to carefully consider the information presented.
- 2.6.6 Appeals for denials at the graduate program level will be reviewed by the program.
 - 2.6.6.1 If the applicant meets CSU minimum requirements, the graduate program may, at its discretion, consider new, serious, and/or compelling information.
 - 2.6.6.2 If, after reconsidering the admissions decision, the graduate program agrees to offer admission, the graduate program will make its recommendation to the Dean of Graduate Studies (or designee).
 - 2.6.6.3 The Dean of Graduate Studies (or designee) will make a final decision and inform the Office of Admissions and the graduate program of that decision.
- 2.6.7 The Office of Admissions will notify the appellant within 4-6 weeks of the response to their appeal.
- 2.6.8 Only one appeal may be submitted per application. In addition, as per Title 3, only one appeal may be submitted per academic term.

3.0 TRANSFER CREDIT

- 3.1 At the option of the program 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. More than 30% requires an exception approval from the Dean of Graduate Studies (or designee). Courses completed for academic credit via CPaCE or Open University are transfer courses for stateside programs
- 3.2. Units already applied towards completion of a previous degree (e.g., undergraduate or graduate) cannot be transferred for credit towards a master's degree. Units reserved for graduate study outside of CSULB that are not used toward the completion of a degree may be transferred. Evidence regarding the units not being used for a degree may include a notation on the transcript or a letter from the degree-granting institution.
 - 3.2.1 For students who seek to use undergraduate units earned at CSULB towards their graduate degree, see the Policy on Graduate Units Earned as a Senior (PS 11-02).
- 3.3 Acceptable transfer coursework must be completed:

- A. At either a domestic institution accredited by a regional accrediting association or an International Academic Institution recognized by the body that verifies international degrees;
 - B. No more than seven years before the student's anticipated program completion date at CSULB, unless revalidated as per 4.8.1; and
 - C. With a minimum equivalent grade of 'C' or better (Note: Students and advisors should be mindful of minimum GPA requirements for satisfactory degree progress and conferring the degree).
- 3.4. It is at the discretion of the program to review, accept, and submit transfer credit requests for graduate students.
- 3.4.1 To accept transfer credit for graduate students:
- A. Students must be matriculated as graduate students; and
 - B. Programs must review the course to determine equivalency, appropriateness, and articulation prospect; courses completed at International Academic Institutions must also be reviewed and approved by the Center for International Education.
- 3.4.2 Programs may choose to implement an assessment of competency (e.g., written or oral examination or portfolio) in transfer decision-making.
- 3.4.3 Programs may have additional requirements for accepting transfer credit.
- 3.5 For Transfer Agreements with Academic or other Institutions (e.g. University Extension), an articulation agreement or an MOU shall be created and approved by the following:
- A. The lead (e.g., Program Coordinator or Department Chair, or Graduate Advisor if appropriate) of the academic unit offering the degree;
 - B. The Dean (or designee) of the College;
 - C. The Dean of Graduate Studies (or designee);
 - D. The Dean (or designee) of the partner institution; and
 - E. When the partner institution is international, the CSULB President.
- 3.5.1 When the partner institution is International, the Associate Vice President of International Education and Global Engagement should be consulted.

4.0 GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR MASTER'S DEGREES

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

- 4.1 Maintain at least a 3.00 average in all the courses listed on the program of study, as per Title 5.
- 4.2 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.
 - 4.2.1 Master's students may repeat one (1) course taken at California State University, Long Beach for grade forgiveness when they are in a 59 or fewer unit master's degree program and earn a grade below the minimum grade required for the course (e.g., D, F, or WU). Master's students may repeat two (2) courses taken at California State University, Long Beach for grade forgiveness when they are in a 60 or greater unit master's program and earn a grade below the minimum grade required for the course (e.g., D, F, or WU).
 - 4.2.2 Courses in which the master's student earned a C can only be repeated for grade forgiveness when the required minimum grade for the course is higher than a C. Courses in which the original grade was the result of a finding of academic dishonesty cannot be repeated for grade forgiveness. Culminating activity courses can never be repeated for grade forgiveness.
 - 4.2.3 For a course's grade to be forgiven, the Graduate Advisor will notify Enrollment Services of which course and grade to be forgiven. A course grade can only be forgiven once, regardless of the number of attempts. All grades will remain on the student's academic record, however, the grade and grade points of the forgiven course will not count toward the grade point averages and units earned.
- 4.3 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.
 - 4.3.1 According to Title 5, students failing to (a) make satisfactory progress or (b) maintain a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.0 (grade of B) in all units attempted subsequent to admission to the program may be placed on academic warning or administrative academic warning. If these students fail to earn grades of sufficient quality and/or fail to complete other requirements as specified by the academic unit to move into Good Standing, they may be disqualified. As per Title 5, disqualification can bar the student from any further enrollment at CSULB. (See Policy Statement 22-14: Policy on Academic Warning and Disqualification for more detailed information and appeal procedures).
 - 4.3.2 Graduate students may appeal disqualification. For more information on the appeals process, please see the Policy on Academic Warning and Disqualification.

- 4.4 Complete all required courses on the program of study, which, as per Title 5, must contain a minimum of 30 units. Some degree programs require additional units. For a graduate degree, the coursework must be upper-division and above. Courses used to fulfill a post-baccalaureate certificate may also be used towards a graduate degree upon approval of the degree program and within adherence to the Policy on Certificates and Micro-credentials (PS 24-17). Courses completed for a post-baccalaureate teaching credential may also be used towards a graduate degree in Education for up to a maximum of 12 units earned at an accredited academic institution with advisor approval, even if this is more than 30% of the total units for the degree. Student teaching units for a credential may not be included in any master's degree program.
- 4.5 Complete at least seventy percent (70%) of the required units in the degree program at CSULB in matriculated status, as per Title 5, or as approved graduate credit reserved as a senior. The academic unit granting the degree may waive units and course requirements provided the minimum 30-unit requirement is met in accordance with Title 5.
- 4.6 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). Not less than one-half of the units required for the degree shall be in courses organized primarily for graduate students. For double-numbered courses that are offered to both undergraduate and graduate students the standard course outline and syllabus will specify how the course will engage and evaluate graduate students to ensure that the curriculum aligns to graduate-level student outcomes.
- 4.7 Complete a culminating activity or culminating activities (see Policy Statement: XX-XX - Policy on Master's Level Program Culminating Activities).
- 4.8 Complete all requirements of the degree program within seven (7) years (the maximum allowed by Title 5) 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). Programs may choose a more stringent program completion period, so long as it is not fewer than 5 years (the minimum permitted by Title 5).
 - 4.8.1 The Dean of Graduate Studies (or designee) may grant an exception to this requirement if warranted by individual circumstances and if the student revalidates 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.
- 4.9 Maintain continuous enrollment every fall and spring semester by registering in a course or in GS 700 (see Policy Statement 18-03: Policy on Graduate Studies 700) or

having received an approved educational leave. Registration in a course or in GS 700 is required in winter or summer session if that is when a student plans to graduate or if the program is year-round and winter and/or summer are considered semesters. If a thesis is submitted to the Thesis and Dissertation Office by the fall or spring deadline, but the student is required to complete only thesis formatting edits after submission, the student is not required to register for GS 700 in winter or summer session.

4.9.1 Although no unit credit is added to the student's program or transcript, GS 700 is considered as one unit of concurrent enrollment credit for fee payment purposes. Registration for GS 700 constitutes enrollment in the university, including for scholarship eligibility purposes and graduate assistantships (see Policy Statement 21-03: Policy on Employment of Graduate Students as Student Assistants, Instructional Student Assistants, Graduate Assistants and Teaching Associates).

4.9.2 Students entering military service maintain continuous enrollment while serving, provided they:

A. Are enlisted or called to active duty during a semester in which they are enrolled or not more than one semester thereafter; and

B. Enroll in courses toward their degree within one calendar year of the date of their release from service.

5.0 ACADEMIC LOAD

5.1 For a graduate student in a master's degree program, 8 (eight) units per semester is a full-time academic load.

The maximum load for graduate students working toward a master's degree is 18 units per semester. If a graduate student wishes to exceed this limit, they shall meet with their Graduate Advisor. If the Graduate Advisor supports this request, the student shall submit an extra unit petition online for Graduate Advisor and Associate Dean of the College approval.

5.2 If a graduate student wishes to exceed the typical academic load for their program, they need to discuss their academic load with the Graduate Advisor or Department Chair or Director."

6.0 THE PROGRAM OF STUDY

6.1 If a program of study as outlined in the University Catalog allows for multiple course options, then the student must develop a program of study in collaboration with their graduate advisor or designee.

6.2 Once a student is advanced to candidacy with an approved program of study, the

program of study may not be changed without the consent of the academic unit and graduate student, except for changing the type of culminating activity. Changing culminating activities requires special approvals (see Policy Statement XX-XX: Policy on Master's Level Program Culminating Activities). Prior to advancement to candidacy, the student may change program degree options within the same degree with the Graduate Advisor's approval. After advancement to candidacy, the student may change program degree options within the same degree with the approval from all of the following: Graduate Advisor, college Associate Dean, Dean of Graduate Studies (or designee).

- 6.3 Students wishing to change degree programs must file a new application for admission. If admitted to the new discipline, the student must then follow all the steps for obtaining approval of a new program of study and advancement to candidacy.
 - 6.4 An approved program of study, either as outlined in the University Catalog or developed in collaboration with the program graduate advisor, remains in effect so long as a candidate is making satisfactory progress, does not withdraw from CSULB, and maintains continuous enrollment.
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- 7.0 ADVANCEMENT TO CANDIDACY
 - 7.1 The requirements for advancement to candidacy are:
 - A. Attainment of classified status as a student in a graduate program at CSULB;
 - B. Approval by the student's academic unit of a program of study (see above);
 - C. Completion with a minimum GPA of 3.0 of at least six units in residence of courses required on the student's program of study;
 - D. At least 3.0 average GPA in courses completed in program of study; and
 - E. Satisfactory completion of any assessments of competence that the academic unit may require.
 - 7.2 Advancement to candidacy should occur as soon as possible after the above requirements have been met and must occur prior to the student applying to graduate.
 - 7.2.1 Students can advance to candidacy and graduate in the same semester or session.
 - 7.3 All students need to consult with their Graduate Advisor regarding advancement to candidacy as well as to determine any program requirements to graduate from CSULB.

8.0 CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT IN CSULB POST-BACCALAUREATE PROGRAMS

- 8.1 Currently matriculated master's students may enroll concurrently in a master's and credential program under the advisement of both programs.
 - 8.1.1 In this case, the student is required to have a plan of study that is approved by representatives from both programs.
- 8.2 Currently matriculated teaching credential students may enroll concurrently in a master's degree program under the advisement of representatives from both programs.
 - 8.2.1 Credential students seeking to concurrently enroll in a master's program are required to formally apply to the master's program.
 - 8.2.2 Once admitted, the student is required to have a plan of study that is approved by representatives from both programs.
- 8.3 Currently matriculated master's students interested in enrolling concurrently in a certificate program shall review the Policy on Certificates and Micro-credentials.
- 8.4 Currently matriculated master's students may enroll concurrently in a second master's degree program with approval of representatives from both programs.
 - 8.4.1 To protect the integrity of the university's master's degrees, the following conditions must be satisfied to award concurrent master's degrees:
 - (1) Students must complete all prerequisites for the concurrent master's degree prior to seeking approval to declare that concurrent master's degree;
 - (2) Students 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;
 - (3) Students must meet the 30-unique-unit minimum for each degree in the concurrent programs. Units beyond the 30-unique-unit minimum may be shared between concurrent degrees;
 - (4) 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).
 - 8.4.2 If the student's current master's program agrees that the additional master's may be appropriate and feasible, the academic unit(s) granting the degrees must collaborate to develop a plan to allow completion of both degrees. The plan must be approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies (or designee) both before the student can begin

work on the additional master's degree and while still enrolled in the initial degree program. The decision whether to approve the student's request should be based on:

- (1) The extent to which the additional master's program would form a coherent intellectual whole (i.e. academically and practically complementary) with the initial program;
- (2) The number of units already completed in the initial master's degree program and student's academic performance in that coursework;
- (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); and
- (4) Any additional criteria the Dean of Graduate Studies (or designee) finds relevant to the decision in any particular case.

8.4.3 Students completing concurrent degrees are considered formally admitted only to the initial master's degree program.

8.4.4 Students wishing to discontinue the initial master's program in favor of the added master's program must reapply to the university, and the plan to complete both degrees would no longer be valid.

8.5 The two postbaccalaureate programs in which a student may concurrently enroll may reside in separate academic units or the same academic unit.

8.6 Academic units may establish a formal cooperation agreement that includes completion plans for both programs and streamlines the process for entering the additional program. This formal cooperation agreement requires the approval of the Dean of Graduate Studies (or designee).

8.7 Concurrently enrolling in two postbaccalaureate programs could have financial aid implications, and students considering such concurrent enrollment should review relevant financial aid policies.

9.0 SECOND MASTER'S DEGREE

9.1 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.

9.2 All candidates for a second master's degree must:

- A. Meet admission requirements of CSULB and the academic unit granting the degree;
- B. 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; and
- C. Earn, after the awarding of the first master's degree, a minimum of 70% units of graduate residence credit at CSULB, including the minimum of 500- and 600-level course units mandated by the academic unit in which the student is earning the second master's degree.

9.3 Units applied towards a previously completed degree cannot be transferred for credit towards a second master's degree.

9.4 The academic unit(s) granting the degrees may waive units and course requirements provided the minimum 30-unique-unit requirement is met.

10.0 POSTHUMOUSLY AWARDING THE MASTER'S DEGREE

The university may award a master's degree posthumously based upon the recommendations of the program, the Dean of the College, and the Dean of Graduate Studies.

The awarding of a posthumous degree is to recognize the academic achievement of the deceased student, and to extend to the university community, family, and friends an opportunity to share in the student's academic experiences at CSULB.

10.1. A death certificate will be required to certify the death of the student.

10.2 The transcript and diploma will note "awarded posthumously."

10.3 The Dean of Students, in consultation with the Dean of the College, may organize a commencement experience for the student's loved ones.

EFFECTIVE: Fall 2025