



ACADEMIC SENATE OFFICE

1600 Holloway Avenue, ADM 551  
San Francisco, CA 94132 – 1722

T: 415/338-1264  
F: 415/338-3899  
senate@sfsu.edu  
senate.sfsu.edu

## ACADEMIC SENATE POLICY

April 29, 2021

**TO:** Lynn Mahoney, President  
San Francisco State University

**FROM:** Teddy Albinak, Chair <sup>DS</sup>  
Academic Senate

**RE:** Senate Policy #S21-295 Policy on Requirements for Graduate Students

**SOURCE COMMITTEE:**  
Academic Policies Committee

### SENATE ACTION:

At its meeting on Tuesday, April 20, 2021 the Academic Senate approved **#S21-295 Policy on Requirements for Graduate Students.**

We solicit your concurrence. Thank You.

**ecc:** Jennifer Summit, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs  
Lori Beth Way, Dean of Undergraduate Education and Academic Planning  
Sophie Clavier, Dean of Graduate Studies  
Margo Landy, University Registrar  
Deans and Associate Deans

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### PRESIDENTIAL ACTION

APPROVED

DocuSigned by:  
  
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05/07/2021 | 7:41 AM PDT

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



**SAN FRANCISCO  
STATE UNIVERSITY**

Policy #: S21-295  
 Supersedes: S/FXX-XXX  
 Senate Approval: 4/20/2021  
 Presidential Approval: 5/7/2021  
 Effective: Fall 2021  
 Last Review:  
 Next Review: Spring 2025

### ***Policy on Requirements for Graduate Students***

#### **Abstract**

This policy outlines requirements for graduate students during their degree programs, excluding the admissions process.

**Key Words:** graduate studies / student requirements

**Author/Source:** Academic Policies Committee/Graduate Studies Division

**Responsible Unit** Graduate Studies Division

#### **History**

Version	Approved	Revisions(s)
1	05/07/2021	Original. Supersedes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• F78-35: Computation of GPA of Graduate Students</li> <li>• S83-105 Faculty for Graduate Programs</li> <li>• S06-238 Graduate Program Quality and Sustainability, Indicators and Standards</li> <li>• S08-246 Culminating Experience Continuous Enrollment Policy</li> <li>• Incorporates material from <i>University Bulletin</i>.</li> </ul>

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### **Policy**

#### **General Requirements for Master's Degree Students**

To award the master's degree, SF State requires that all graduate students seeking a master's degree must:

- Meet the basic admission requirements for the University and the department or degree program;
- Complete two levels of the Written English Proficiency Requirement;
- Complete the specific departmental course requirements leading to the degree;
- Maintain a 3.0 grade point average as a continuing student;
- Complete a Culminating Experience defined by the department/program and approved by the University.

### **Certificate requirements**

- Meet the basic admission requirements for the University and apply through the department or certificate program even if a student is already matriculated to a graduate program;
- Complete the specific course requirements leading to the certificate; and,
- Maintain a 3.0 grade point average as a continuing student.

### **Credential Requirements**

- Meet the basic admission requirements for the University and the department or degree program;
- Complete the specific course requirements leading to the credential;
- Maintain a 3.0 grade point average as a continuing student during the credential program.
- Adhere to the requirements of the specific credentialing body of the credential.

### **Doctoral Degree Requirements**

Students accepted into one of the doctoral degrees at San Francisco State should work closely with their academic advisors to ensure that all policies and procedures are being followed.

Procedures for continuing student performance in doctoral programs are different from those required for students in master's programs.

### **Written English Proficiency Requirements**

Each graduate student must demonstrate, in an independently written format, the ability to write English correctly and effectively to explain, defend, or argue discipline-specific issues. The written English proficiency policy (#S19-014: University Policy on Written English Proficiency) requires two distinct levels of assessment: Level I (admission) and Level II (degree requirement). The Level I requirement must be met prior to admission

or no later than the first year of enrollment. Typical Level I written requirements may include a department placement exam, writing samples, standardized writing tests, graduate writing course, or creative works portfolio as determined by the department. The required scores on standardized tests are laid out in S19-014: University Policy on Written English Proficiency.

Students who, within the first year of attendance, do not meet the writing competency conditions stated in the admission letter are subject to declassification from the degree program.

The Level II writing requirement is determined by the department/program and is usually associated with the completion of the Culminating Experience or may be related to a designated writing-intensive course taken prior to the Culminating Experience.

### **Advancement to Candidacy**

The plan of study that must be completed prior to award of the degree is documented on the Advancement to Candidacy (ATC). The ATC must be submitted to the Division of Graduate Studies, according to their procedures and processes, after completion of 18 units toward the degree and no later than the semester prior to starting any preliminary research and before enrolling in the Culminating Experience course.

The Advancement to Candidacy (ATC) must be approved by the graduate major advisor and the graduate coordinator/chair of the student's department or program. The ATC is submitted to the dean of the Division of Graduate Studies/or designee for evaluation and approval. Upon approval of the ATC, the student is advanced to candidacy and classified status.

Any change in the ATC requires that the student submit to their department and the Division of Graduate Studies all necessary petitions.

Processes and forms are available on the Graduate Studies website and are specific to each degree program.

### **Standards for Student Degree Programs**

Graduate students must make continuous satisfactory progress toward their degree by completing a minimum of 6 units each year, not including the summer session. Departments or programs have the right to require that students complete more than the 6 units each year. Cohorted professional programs may require that students complete specified courses in sequence and maintain full-time enrollment. Graduate students who are enrolled, but not taking courses leading to the degree, may be declassified by the Dean of Graduate Studies upon recommendation by the department.

*Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations* requires that a master's or doctoral degree shall be completed in no more than seven years. No more than seven years may elapse from the first semester of enrollment after admission and completion of the degree requirements. Graduate programs requiring more than 30 units must also be completed within seven years. Programs may require that students complete all coursework within a shorter time period provided the curriculum, requirements, and timelines are clearly stated in the program materials and the sequence of course offerings is adequate for students to meet the required time to completion. Professional programs may require that students maintain continuous enrollment throughout their programs and complete courses in sequence as required for licensure or certification.

### **Extension of Seven-Year Limit**

Students, who for documented, serious, and compelling reasons, cannot complete their degree within the seven-year limit, may request one extension. Extensions cannot exceed one year. Students requesting an extension must be in good academic standing, have departmental validation that all coursework exceeding seven years is currently relevant in the field. Departments may require additional coursework to meet these requirements. Students requesting an extension after enrollment in the culminating experience will be required to enroll in the culminating experience continuous enrollment program, either in regular university or the College of Extended Learning, depending on the program expectations for enrollment.

Graduate students who have left the University for two or more consecutive semesters must reapply to the University.

### **Consecutive Enrollment**

Prior to enrolling in the Culminating Experience, a student who is not enrolled for two consecutive semesters must reapply for admission to the University and to the major department. Students need to complete all required coursework, the written English proficiency requirement (Levels I and II), and the Culminating Experience within the seven-year time limit. On rare occasions, students can petition for an exception.

### **Advancement to Candidacy (ATC) Requirements**

The following minimum standards apply to Advancement to Candidacy (ATC).

Units included on the ATC must conform with Senate policy, as stated in the originally approved S06-238 Graduate Program Quality and Sustainability, Indicators and Standards (superseded by this policy).

- A minimum of 30-semester units or more as required for the degree. No degree will be awarded where the minimum number of units specified for the degree has not been completed.

- Seventy percent (70%) of the units must be from graduate-level courses:
  - Fifty percent (50%) of the units from exclusively graduate-level courses (700-999 level). Most programs require more units or all units to be taken at this level.
  - Twenty percent (20%) of the units on the ATC may be graduate paired courses (graduate students must always register for the graduate designated section of the paired course).
- Thirty percent (30%) of the units may be from upper-division level courses:
  - No lower-division course work (100-299) is allowed on the ATC.
- At least 18 units of coursework taken within the department offering the degree program.
- No more than 9 units from any combination of Open University (CEL) work, credit by examination and transfer units may be used toward a 30-unit program and proportionally more for programs that exceed 30 units (e.g., a maximum of 18 semester units may be used in meeting the requirement of a 60-unit program if accepted by the program).
- No more than 12 units earned through an official graduate international exchange program (or proportionally more for higher unit programs) if approved by the department/program and the dean of Graduate Studies. Exchange work must be at the graduate level. Students using 12 units of exchange work on their ATC may not, in addition, use transfer work, Open University (CEL), credit by examination, or more than 6 units of 899 work on their ATC.
- All units of a completed (awarded by SFSU) graduate certificate are transferable to a degree with approval from the department and Dean of Graduate Studies.
- Any ATC course substitutions must be approved by the department prior to enrolling in a substituting course.
- The ATC may not include more than 6 units of credit in 899 Independent Study courses (699 not permitted) related to the degree objective.
- All non-supervisory courses listed on the ATC must have a grade of B- or higher.
- The ATC may not include more than 4 graduate student teaching units applicable to the discipline.
- No prerequisite coursework may be used to meet degree requirements.
- The ATC may not include any units used to obtain a previously awarded degree except if they are part of an approved curriculum in a blended program such as the SF Scholars program.

- At least 21 of 30 units must be taken in residence on this campus or proportionally more for programs that exceed 30 units. SFSU online or remote courses are considered to be courses taken in residence.
- Summer Semester academic units are counted as residence credit.

### **Grading Standards on the ATC**

- Both a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or better in all post-baccalaureate work taken at San Francisco State AND an ATC GPA of 3.0 (coursework listed on the ATC) or better is required. Departments can have stricter requirements.
- All non-supervisory courses listed on the ATC must have a grade of B- or higher.
- An ATC will not be approved if the transcript reflects an incomplete grade (i.e., I or IC). Students should resubmit the ATC after a grade is earned for the incomplete. IC grades are not permitted on the ATC.
- Grades earned by students in required English proficiency courses may not be used on the ATC and are not computed in the grade point average for the master's degree, but will be computed for evaluation of the SF State overall GPA.
- A grade of RP is given for a Culminating Experience course until completed. Upon completion, the Culminating Experience course grade needs to be changed to CR or letter grade.

### **Culminating Experience**

As required by the California State University, graduate students must complete a Culminating Experience which may include thesis, dissertation, field study or applied research, creative works project, supervised field internship, seminar, or comprehensive examination prior to graduation.

A Proposal for Culminating Experience (including Human/or Animal Subjects, approved by the Institutional Review Board) approval and as per CSU policy, if required and must be approved by Graduate Studies before enrolling in the culminating experience course.

#### **Selection of Culminating Experience Committee**

Regardless of the type of Culminating Experience being completed, a committee must be established to evaluate whether the student has satisfactorily completed the final requirement for the degree.

- The committee must consist of at least two members, and departments can require additional members.
- The chair (first member) and the second member of the committee must hold tenured/tenure-track faculty appointments in the major department.

- In circumstances where special expertise is available in another department, the Dean of Graduate Studies may authorize a designated tenured/tenure-track faculty member from a related department to serve as the first or second member.
- Lecturer faculty, FERPs, emeriti, or experts in the field from off-campus universities, industry, or research facilities may serve as a second or third member of a student's committee if they have extensive expertise in the area under study, hold a terminal degree in the field, and are approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies. A current curriculum vitae must be on file in Graduate Studies. Any proposed committee member who does not hold a terminal degree in the major field of study must be approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies to determine if committee membership is appropriate.
- Due to the temporary nature of these special appointments, both the student and the member must understand the risk to the timely completion of the Culminating Experience.
- If a committee member of the Culminating Experience leaves or is unavailable during the agreed-upon semesters of completion of the Culminating Experience, the student will need to reconstitute the committee. New faculty members often have different expectations and may require a student to revise and resubmit the Culminating Experience Proposal.
- Students should be aware that few faculty members are available to provide guidance with the Culminating Experience during Winter Break or the summer months. Students required to complete a defense of their thesis or research should plan for completion during the regular semester period. Agreements for review of drafts or defense hearings held outside of semester weeks should be obtained in writing.
- To officially change the composition of a Culminating Experience committee, a student must submit a Petition for Committee Revisions to Graduate Studies.

### **Registration and Grading for Culminating Experience Courses**

Students must have an approved Advancement To Candidacy (ATC) form and Proposal for Culminating Experience on file at the Division of Graduate Studies prior to registering for the Culminating Experience course. The registrar will block admission to a culminating experience class until approval is received.

- When the Culminating Experience project is completed, ~~be sure that~~ the student's committee chair (first reader) files a grade change to CR (Credit) with the Registrar's Office.
- A Report of Completion must be filed for all Culminating Experiences

- Thesis/Dissertation/Written Creative Works need to be reviewed by Graduate Studies and submitted to the Library. Adhere to Thesis Guidelines for completion.
- If students do not complete the course by the end of the semester of registration students will receive a grade of RP (Report in Progress) and should not register for the course again.

### **Continuous Enrollment in Culminating Experience**

*(This section is incorporated and superseded in its entirety from S08-246: Culminating Experience Continuous Enrollment Policy)*

- 1 Students have the semester they enroll in the CE and the following semester to complete their degree requirements. If all requirements except the CE are completed during the semester students enroll in the CE, they do not need to enroll the following semester.
- 2 Students who do not complete their Culminating Experience during the semester of enrollment in the Culminating Experience or the following semester, excluding winter and summer, (the “grace” semester) must enroll in a zero-unit course with the College of Extended Learning (CEL) and every subsequent semester until the Culminating Experience is completed. Enrollment in the CEL Culminating Experience course provides students access to SFSU libraries, discipline-associated laboratories and facilities, and Culminating Experience advisors. Students are automatically withdrawn from their degree program if they fail to maintain continuous enrollment status after the grace semester. (For the purpose of this policy, only the fall and spring semesters are counted as semesters.)
- 3 Students who do not maintain continuous enrollment in their Culminating Experience course and subsequently return to complete their Culminating Experience within the 7-year time limit to complete requirements for graduate degrees must be reinstated in their degree program and may have to file a new Proposal for Culminating Experience.
- 4 Students who are past the 7-year limit must formally reapply for admission to the program in which they were completing their Culminating Experience. There is no guarantee of readmission. If readmitted, must submit a new Graduate Approved Program to the Division of Graduate Studies.

### **Application for Graduation**

Candidates for a degree must file an application for graduation in accordance with the University calendar. Degree candidates must have both an approved Advancement to Candidacy (ATC) and Proposal for Culminating Experience (PCE) on file and a cumulative and an ATC GPA of 3.0 or better to be eligible to apply for graduation.

### **Probation, Disqualification, and Declassification**

## **Academic Probation**

Students will be placed on academic probation if the overall, SF State, or semester GPA falls below 3.0 (B). The Registrar will place an academic hold on the student record and the student will not be allowed to enroll in Early Priority Registration. After grades are published by the Registrar at the end of the semester during which the student is on probation, one of three actions will occur:

1. the student attains a 3.0 in the overall and semester GPA and is eligible to register for classes in the Final Priority Registration period, or
2. the student does not attain a 3.0 GPA in the overall or semester GPA and the student is subject to disqualification and is not allowed to register in the Final Priority Registration period, or
3. Students who are academically disqualified from the graduate degree, credential, or any certificate program and from further enrollment in the University may file for reinstatement. Faculty and the program graduate coordinator may approve or deny the student to continue the program for one semester.

## **Administrative Probation**

A graduate degree, credential, or certificate student may be placed on administrative probation by the Dean of Graduate Studies for any of the following reasons:

- Withdrawal from all or a substantial portion of a program of studies in successive terms. (A student whose withdrawal is directly associated with a documented chronic or recurring disability or its treatment is not to be subject to administrative/academic probation for such withdrawal.)
- Repeated failure to progress toward the stated degree objective, or another program objective.
- Failure to comply, after due notice, with an academic requirement or regulation that is routine for all students or a defined group of students.

## **Administrative Disqualification**

A graduate student who has been placed on administrative probation may be disqualified by the Dean of Graduate Studies from further attendance if:

- The conditions for removal of administrative probation are not met within the period specified.
- The student becomes subject to academic probation while on administrative probation.
- The student becomes subject to administrative probation for a second or more time.

- In addition, the Dean of Graduate Studies may disqualify a student who at any time during enrollment has demonstrated behavior so contrary to the standards of the profession for which the student is preparing as to render them unfit for the profession. In such cases, a disqualification will occur immediately upon notice to the student, which shall include an explanation of the basis for the action, and the campus may require the student to discontinue enrollment as of the date of the notification.

### **Declassification from the Degree Program**

A student may be declassified (disenrolled) from a graduate degree program for a range of reasons even if the GPA is above a 3.0. Reasons for declassification may include, but are not restricted to: unprofessional conduct, behavioral issues that interfere with the teaching and learning of others, failure to make progress toward the degree as set forth by the University and program policies, failure to meet grade requirements to maintain good standing in the program and/or University, and/or the department/program faculty determine that the student is incapable of completing degree requirements at the level expected of a graduate student in the discipline.

- Failure to make progress toward the degree as set forth by the University and program policies (e.g., not taking courses related to the degree, not meeting program requirements to take a required number of courses each year, repeated "I" or "W" requests);
- Failure to meet expectations for discipline-required culminating experience with little improvement after multiple attempts or drafts;
- Failure to meet grade requirements to maintain good standing in the program and/or University;
- Plagiarism or academic dishonesty identified (cases are referred to Student Conduct Office).

The declassification request must be initiated by the major department with support from the department/program chair and college dean or designee. Requests are submitted to the Dean of Graduate Studies for final action and official notification to the student and the Registrar's Office. Declassified students will not be permitted to enroll through regular University or Open University in any undergraduate or graduate courses in the program or degree from which they were declassified. Unless declassification was related to conduct issues that interfere with campus interactions, declassified students are eligible to apply to a new program.