

Adopted: March 14, 2023

**ACADEMIC SENATE
Of
CALIFORNIA POLYTECHNIC STATE UNIVERSITY
San Luis Obispo, CA**

AS-955-23

RESOLUTION ON GRADUATE CURRICULUM FOR SEMESTER CONVERSION

Impact on Existing Policy: Amends AS 877-19 (blended programs, section on unit total and double-counting)ⁱ

1 WHEREAS, The Chancellor's Office has mandated that Cal Poly convert to semesters
2 by fall of 2026; and
3

4 WHEREAS, Conversion to semesters requires that all academic policies be reviewed
5 and revised as appropriate; and
6

7 WHEREAS, AS 825-17 specifies the required percentage of graduate level courses in
8 a master's program; and
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10 WHEREAS, AS 877-19 provides Cal Poly policy on blended programs; there be it
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12 RESOLVED: that the general guidelines for graduate curriculum at Cal Poly in the
13 attached policy shall be adopted; and be it further
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15 RESOLVED: that the revised policy on blended programs described in section 7 of the
16 attachment become effective immediately upon adoption of this
17 resolution.

Proposed by: Academic Senate
Curriculum Committee
Date: January 10, 2023

ⁱ (1) Describe how this resolution impacts existing policy on educational matters that affect the faculty. Examples include curricula, academic personnel policies, and academic standards.
(2) Indicate if this resolution supersedes or rescinds current resolutions.
(3) If there is no impact on existing policy, please indicate NONE.

General Policies on Graduate Curriculum for Semesters (Master's Degree Programs, and Specializations)

1. Number of Units Required in a Master's Degree Program
 - a. A minimum of 30 semester units of approved graduate work (Title 5 § 40510).
 - b. Not less than 21 semester units shall be completed in residence. The appropriate campus authority may authorize the substitution of credit earned by alternate means for a part of this residence requirement. (Title 5 § 40510).
 - c. No fewer than 60% of the units required for the degree shall be in courses organized primarily for graduate students (5000 level) (AS 825-17).
 - d. Certain 4000-series courses may be completed by the graduate student as part of the degree program when this is consistent with university requirements, departmental master's degree specifications, and the candidate's formal program of study.
 - e. Only 4000- and 5000-level courses are allowed in an approved graduate plan of study.
 - f. In those programs where specific courses below the 4000-level may be essential for a student's success, the student may be conditionally accepted to the program contingent upon completing those courses.

2. Core and Specializations
 - a. More than 50% of the total units shall be designated as the program core and comprise requirements common to all students earning the degree, addressing a common set of learning outcomes for the program.
 - i. Courses required in the core will be drawn from specified courses, lists of courses, or course areas, and may include the units associated with the culminating experience.
 - ii. Course/PLO mapping should demonstrate that students earning the same degree have a similar learning outcome.
 - b. Specializations are defined as an aggregate of courses within a graduate degree program designed to give a student specialized knowledge, competence, or skill.
 - c. A specialization will include at least 8 semester units from specified courses, course lists, or course categories of 4000- or 5000-level coursework distinct from the program core, but will be less than 50% of the total units in the program.
 - d. Courses in the specialization will be listed separately from the degree program core on the curriculum sheet.
 - e. Completion of a specialization will be noted on the graduate student's transcript and will be shown on the diploma.
 - f. In order to ensure accurate reporting of enrollments and degrees granted, the program core must have more required units than the number required in the specialization. Thus, specializations need to constitute less than 50% of the

program curriculum. Conversely, the core must constitute more than 50% of the program curriculum. ([ASA-2017-02](#))

3. Culminating Experience

- a. The culminating experience for the granting of a graduate degree is the successful completion of a thesis, project or comprehensive examination (Title 5 § 40510). Programs shall determine the most appropriate culminating experience for their curriculum, and may choose to allow students to select from multiple options.

i. Thesis

1. A thesis is the written product of a systematic study of a significant problem. It identifies the problem, states the major assumptions, explains the significance of the undertaking, sets forth the sources for and methods of gathering information, analyzes the data, and offers a conclusion or recommendation.
2. The finished product evidences originality, critical and independent thinking, appropriate organization and format, and thorough documentation.
3. Normally, an oral defense of the thesis is required.

ii. Project

1. A project is a significant undertaking appropriate to the fine and applied arts or to professional fields.
2. It evidences originality and independent thinking, appropriate form and organization, and a rationale.
3. It is described and summarized in a written report that includes the project's significance, objectives, methodology, and a conclusion or recommendation.
4. An oral defense of the project may be required.

iii. Comprehensive Examination

1. A comprehensive examination is one of the possible culminating experiences for the master's degree and assesses the student's ability to integrate knowledge, show critical and independent thinking, and demonstrate mastery of the subject matter.
2. The results of the examination should show independent thinking, appropriate organization, critical analysis and accuracy of documentation.
3. A record of the examination questions and responses is maintained.

4. Course Unit Limitations

- a. No more than six semester units shall be in student teaching.
- b. No more than six semester units shall be allowed for a thesis or project. (Title 5, Section 40510)

5. Time Limit for Degree

- a. The time allowed to complete coursework in the formal study plan, including thesis and project courses, is seven years. (Title 5 § 40510)

6. Grade Point Average

- a. A grade point average of 3.0 (grade of B) or better across all courses taken to satisfy the requirements for the Master's degree is required, except that a course in which no letter grade is assigned shall not be used in computing the grade point average. (Title 5 § 40510)

7. Blended Programs (AS 877-19)

- a. Blended programs award a bachelor's degree and a master's degree at the same time. The purpose of the blended program (AA-2012-01) is to provide an accelerated pathway from a bachelor's to a master's degree and to enhance the undergraduate learning experience.
- b. up to 12 semester units may at the program's discretion be double counted for both the Bachelor's degree and the Master's degree so that the total number of units may be 138 semester units (Title 5 § 40510), provided that
 - i. none of the required graduate classes is replaced by an undergraduate class, and
 - ii. the graduate classes that are also counted toward the Bachelor's degree either assume the more rudimentary knowledge taught at the undergraduate level or cover the content of the undergraduate courses that they replace.
- c. Other policies regarding blended programs are specified in AS 877-19 and AA-2012-01



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

MEMORANDUM

To: Jerusha Greenwood
Chair, Academic Senate

Date: July 28, 2023

From: Jeffrey D. Armstrong
President

Copies: Gregory Bohr
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Jeffrey D. Armstrong

Subject: Response to AS-955-23 Resolution on Graduate Curriculum for Semester Conversion

By way of this memo, I approve the above-entitled Academic Senate resolution. Please extend my thanks to the Academic Senate and the Academic Senate Curriculum Committee for attending to the efficient and effective revision of academic policies relating to semester conversion. This revision to the General Policies on Graduate Curriculum for Semesters will ensure that academic programs have clear guidance regarding graduate curriculum requirements including blended programs unit requirements, and additional parameters for graduate programs at Cal Poly as they plan their semester curriculum.