Master of Science in Electrical Engineering Program Handbook

Department of Electrical Engineering
California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo

Academic Year 2026–2027
Revision 2.0

Contents

This handbook is intended for students directly admitted to the Master of Science in Electrical Engineering (MSEE) program. Students who are pursuing the graduate degree through the Blended BS/MS (BMS) program should consult the separate BMS program handbook for the requirements and procedures specific to their pathway.

The timelines, deadlines, and academic procedures specified in this handbook are based on Cal Poly's semester system. These requirements apply to the current semester-based academic year and replace previous quarter-based procedures.

1 Introduction

The *Master of Science* program in Electrical Engineering provides students with advanced education and training in strategic areas including electric power systems, radio frequency and microwave design, signal processing, controls, computational intelligence and machine learning, and computer system-on-chip design. The program has the following academic objectives:

- Preparation for advanced engineering positions in research and development, innovative design, systems analysis and design, and engineering management
- Professional development and continuing education opportunities for practicing engineers
- Academic preparation for doctoral studies in engineering, including Doctor of Engineering and Ph.D. programs
- Foundation for maintaining technical currency and advancing professional expertise throughout graduates' careers

The Master of Science in Electrical Engineering is a post-baccalaureate degree program requiring a minimum of 30 semester units of advanced study in Electrical Engineering and closely related fields. All degree requirements must be completed within seven years of first enrollment at graduate status.

1.1 Program Tracks

Two distinct tracks with different culminating experiences are available for the MS in Electrical Engineering degree:

i. ***Thesis-Based Track:*** Requires coursework and completion of a formal research *Thesis* under the direction of an EE or CPE faculty member, followed by a successful oral defense. This track provides intensive research experience and deep specialization in a specific technical area, which makes it well-suited for students considering doctoral studies, research-oriented careers, or those seeking focused expertise in their field of interest.

ii. ***Exam-Based Track:*** Requires advanced coursework with a comprehensive *Exam* as the culminating experience. This track emphasizes broad technical knowledge across multiple areas of electrical engineering and is ideal for students pursuing professional engineering careers in industry who desire comprehensive exposure to diverse advanced technical domains.

Students should select the track that best aligns with their career objectives and academic interests.

1.2 Academic Resources and Policies

Students are required to familiarize themselves with the current Cal Poly Academic Catalog, which contains essential information regarding graduate studies in the Electrical Engineering Department. The Cal Poly Graduate Education Handbook, available through the Graduate Education website, provide additional important guidance for all graduate students.

This handbook serves as a departmental supplement to the university catalog and Graduate Education policies. Students are responsible for understanding and complying with all applicable university policies, procedures, and requirements as outlined in official Cal Poly publications.

2 Admission Requirements and Eligibility

2.1 Academic Prerequisites

Applicants to the Master of Science in Electrical Engineering program must possess a bachelor's degree in engineering or a closely related physical science from an institution accredited by a regional accrediting association. Candidates must demonstrate a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.0 in their undergraduate coursework.

2.2 Standardized Testing Requirements

The MS in Electrical Engineering program does not require standardized test scores such as the GRE for admission, though applicants may submit GRE scores if they wish them to be considered. Applicant evaluation is based on academic performance, letters of recommendation, statement of purpose, and overall application materials that demonstrate readiness for graduate-level study.

Applicants with a cumulative grade point average below 3.0 may be considered for admission on a case-by-case basis if their application demonstrates exceptional academic potential through strong research background, outstanding standardized test performance (if submitted), and is supported by multiple strong letters of recommendation from faculty members familiar with the applicant's academic capabilities.

2.3 Provisional Admission

Students who are admitted to the MS Electrical Engineering program while completing their undergraduate degree must provide an official transcript documenting successful completion of the bachelor's degree before beginning graduate coursework.

2.4 English Language Proficiency Requirements

Graduate applicants whose native language is not English and whose undergraduate education was completed primarily in a language other than English must demonstrate English language proficiency. Applicants who have not earned a bachelor's degree from a post-secondary institution where English is the primary language of instruction must submit scores from either:

- Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL iBT): Minimum internet-based score of 80. Scores must be from tests taken within two years of application. Cal Poly's institution code is 4038.
- International English Language Testing System (IELTS): Minimum overall score of 6.5. This test must have been taken within two years of application.

3 Application Procedures

All prospective students must submit a complete graduate application through Cal State Apply at https://www.calstate.edu/apply. Current application procedures, deadlines, and detailed instructions are available on the Cal Poly Admissions website at https://www.calpoly.edu/admissions/graduate-student.

The following documents must be submitted to complete the application:

i. Statement of purpose outlining academic and professional objectives

ii. Current resume or curriculum vitae

iii. Official transcripts from all undergraduate and post-secondary institutions attended

iv. Three official letters of recommendation, preferably from faculty members or professional supervisors familiar with the applicant's academic or technical capabilities

Questions regarding the application process should be directed to the Cal Poly Graduate Admissions Office at gradadmissions@calpoly.edu or by consulting the Graduate Admissions website.

3.1 Application Deadlines

The MS in Electrical Engineering program has two application deadlines per academic year:

- *Fall Semester Admission*: January 1
- *Spring Semester Admission*: September 1

Note: International students may apply only for Fall semester admission with an application deadline of January 1.

Current application deadlines and procedures are available at:
https://www.calpoly.edu/admissions/graduate-student/dates-and-deadlines

4 Admission Process and Decision Notification

Applications are evaluated by the EE Graduate Coordinator in consultation with the department Graduate Committee. The review process considers all application materials, with particular attention to academic preparation, graduate work potential, and alignment with departmental faculty expertise and research interests.

Official admission decisions and notifications are issued by the Cal Poly Admissions Office following departmental recommendation. Applicants will receive written notification of their admission status through the contact information provided in their application.

5 General Academic Guidelines

5.1 Academic Advising

The Electrical Engineering Department designates a faculty member to serve as the *Graduate Coordinator*, who functions as the official academic advisor for all MS students in the program. While students are encouraged to seek guidance from any faculty member, the Graduate Coordinator must approve and sign all required academic forms and documents.

Students pursuing the thesis option should identify and engage a thesis advisor as early as possible in their graduate program. The thesis advisor provides specialized guidance on coursework selection to support thesis research and offers expertise in the student's chosen area of specialization.

5.2 Registration and Continuous Enrollment

General Enrollment Requirements

Graduate students must maintain continuous enrollment at Cal Poly from the time of first enrollment in a graduate program until completion of the degree. Continuous enrollment is defined as being enrolled during Fall and Spring semesters each year. A student may be required to enroll in the Summer semester if Summer is the semester of degree completion, as all graduate students must be enrolled in the semester in which they graduate.

Approved Leaves of Absence

Students experiencing circumstances requiring temporary interruption of studies must contact the Graduate Coordinator prior to taking leave. University-approved leaves of absence, including Medical Leave and Planned Educational Leave as defined in the Cal Poly Catalog, exempt students from continuous enrollment requirements during the approved leave period. Students cannot file Leaves of Absence for the first term they have reached graduate standing.

Continuous Enrollment Maintenance

Students maintain continuous enrollment through either:

- Regular enrollment in degree-applicable coursework or thesis units
- Registration in *GS 5597 Continued Graduate Study* during semesters when not otherwise enrolled

GS 5597 is a one-unit, credit/no-credit (CR/NC) course administered through Cal Poly Extended Education to minimize the cost. Units earned in GS 5597 *do not* count toward degree requirements but fulfill continuous enrollment obligations.

Consequences of Enrollment Gaps

Students who fail to maintain continuous enrollment will not be permitted to graduate until all non-enrollment periods are addressed through retroactive registration in GS 5597, with payment

required for each semester of non-enrollment.

5.3 Graduation Writing Requirement

Graduate students admitted for Fall 2023 or thereafter are *not* required to fulfill the Graduation Writing Requirement (GWR).

However, all graduate students admitted *before* Fall 2023 must satisfy the Graduation Writing Requirement (GWR). Failure to complete this requirement will prevent degree conferral. Students who completed the GWR as part of a Cal Poly undergraduate degree are exempt from repeating this requirement.

Detailed information regarding GWR fulfillment requirements is available on the Office of Writing and Learning website.

5.4 Formal Study Plan

The Formal Study Plans, specifically the *Working Formal Study Plan (WFSP)* and the *Final Formal Study Plan (FFSP)*, document student's intended coursework to satisfy all MSEE degree requirements.

- Students must submit a *"Working Formal Study Plan and Advancement to Candidacy"* form to the Graduate Coordinator within the first five weeks of their first semester of enrollment, outlining their planned coursework and culminating experience option: "Exam" for Exam-Based or "Thesis" for Thesis-Based track.
- The *"Final Formal Study Plan"* must be submitted within the first five weeks of the intended graduation semester.

The E-Forms for study plans are available on the Graduate Education website:
`https://grad.calpoly.edu/checklist-forms/steps-to-graduation.html`

All study plans require approval by the Graduate Coordinator, followed by endorsement from the College of Engineering and the Graduate Education Office.

- Thesis-based students should list their *thesis advisor* in the "Advisor" field for approval.
- Exam-based students should list the *Graduate Coordinator* as the "Advisor" for approval.

Students should consult the Cal Poly Catalog, this handbook, and departmental course schedules when developing their study plan. Consultation with faculty members and the Graduate Coordinator is strongly recommended to ensure academic coherence and alignment with career objectives.

The *Formal Study Plan* must satisfy the following requirements:

Courses taken under the quarter system may be applied toward semester MS degree requirements. Quarter units will be converted to semester units by dividing by a factor of 1.5. The course level distribution requirements (minimum 5000-level units and maximum 4000-level electives) apply to all coursework, with quarter-system 400/500-level courses corresponding to semester-system 4000/5000-level courses.

Requirement	Thesis-based MS	Exam-based MS
Total units	Minimum of 30 semester units	
Graduate seminar	EE 5563 — 2 units (1 unit/semester × 2 semesters)	
EE core	8–9 units selected from EE 4406, EE 4410, EE 4431, EE 5502, EE 5509, EE 5513, EE 5525	
Thesis / exam	EE 5599 Thesis — 6 units	EE 5597 Comprehensive Exam *or* EE 5594 PE Exam — 1 unit
Minimum 5000-level EE/CPE units	18 units total, of which ≥ 10 are beyond EE 5563 & EE 5599	18 units total, of which ≥ 15 are beyond EE 5563 & EE 5597/5594
Technical electives (4000-/5000-level)	Maximum of 12 units†	

General rules (both tracks): Only 4000- and 5000-level courses count toward the MS EE degree; courses below the 4000 level (e.g., 3000-level) do not satisfy any requirement.

† Of the 12 technical-elective units, at most 8 units may come from College of Engineering, MATH, STAT, or PHYS courses. CPE courses are treated as equivalent to EE courses and are *not* subject to this 8-unit limit.

- **Residency and Transfer Credit Requirements**: Minimum 21 units completed at Cal Poly. Up to 9 semester units from other institutions may be accepted as part of the Study Plan, provided the courses were not used toward the completion of another degree and are approved by the graduate program.

  Students who subsequently enter a graduate program at Cal Poly may petition to receive graduate credit for up to nine semester units of 4000/5000-level coursework,

- **Additional Restrictions**:
  - Credit/no-credit courses (except EE 5563) cannot be used in the Formal Study Plan to fulfill degree requirements, but may be taken as prerequisites or as supplemental coursework.
  - Cooperative Education courses (EE 5595) maintain enrollment but do not count toward the 30-unit requirement for the MS degree
  - Study plan must demonstrate academic coherence with appropriate breadth and depth in a chosen area of specialization

5.5 Quarter-to-Semester Transition Accommodations

For continuing MS EE students who began the program under the quarter system and will complete the degree under the semester system, two accommodations apply. First, the graduate seminar requirement is considered satisfied upon completion of 2.5 quarter-unit-equivalent seminar units,

earned through a combination of one EE 563 course (1 quarter unit) and one EE 5563 course (1 semester unit). Second, the minimum unit requirement for graduation may be considered satisfied even if the student is short by up to 1 quarter unit (equivalently, 0.67 semester units), provided the deficiency results solely from quarter-to-semester conversion and all other degree requirements have been completed. These accommodations apply only to students directly impacted by the transition and remain in effect only for this affected population.

5.6 Academic Performance Standards

Students must maintain a minimum GPA of 3.00 in all coursework listed on the *Formal Study Plan*. Failure to maintain this minimum cumulative GPA will prevent degree completion and graduation.

Courses completed with grades of D+ or lower do not satisfy degree requirements and must be repeated. When courses are repeated, both the original and repeat grades are included in GPA calculations, though only the satisfactory grade fulfills the degree requirement.

5.7 Request for Degree Evaluation

Students must submit an *Request for Degree Evaluation* E-Form the term they expect to graduate (within the first five weeks). The form is available at:
https://grad.calpoly.edu/checklist-forms/steps-to-graduation.html

All degree requirements must be completed within seven years of first enrollment at graduate status.

5.8 Supervised Independent Study

EE 5599 (Thesis) and EE 5500 (Individual Study) require faculty supervision and prior approval of study topics. Students must obtain supervisory course approval forms and registration permissions from the EE Department Office before enrollment. Required permission electronic forms are available online: EE Thesis Permission Form and EE 5500 Permission Form.

Note that EE 5500 Individual Study is generally limited to 3 units *maximum* on any Formal Study Plan. Graduate students must enroll in EE 5500 rather than the undergraduate equivalent EE 4400 for independent study credit.

6 Thesis-Based MS Track

6.1 Overview and Requirements

The thesis track represents one of two culminating experience options available to Master of Science in Electrical Engineering students. The thesis option provides students with intensive research experience and prepares them for doctoral studies or research-oriented professional careers.

According to Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations, a thesis constitutes "the written product of a systematic study of a significant problem". A satisfactory thesis must:

- 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.

- The finished product evidences originality, critical and independent thinking, appropriate organization and format, and thorough documentation.
- Normally, an oral defense of the thesis is required.

6.2 Thesis Advisor Selection and Responsibilities

The thesis advisor must be a permanent, full-time faculty member of the Electrical Engineering or Computer Engineering Departments. Students interested in pursuing the Thesis track should consult the departmental Faculty Interest list (available via https://ee.calpoly.edu/department-directory) to identify potential advisors with expertise aligned with their research interests. Students are strongly recommended to identify a research topic and thesis advisor during the first semester in the program to benefit from early guidance on research project development and coursework selection.

The thesis advisor provides comprehensive guidance throughout the research process:

- Assist with defining the thesis project, clarifying objectives and deliverables.
- Suggest appropriate preparation for the research such as relevant coursework, and guide the literature review.
- Provide technical advice to address challenges, roadblocks, and dead ends inherent in research projects.
- Review thesis drafts and provide feedback on required revisions.
- Determine the appropriate timing and unit load for EE 5599 registration.
- Recommend faculty members with the requisite technical expertise to serve on the Thesis Committee.
- Certify readiness for the oral defense and assist with preparations (e.g., review of presentation materials).

Regular meetings with the thesis advisor are expected to ensure adequate progress monitoring and timely resolution of research challenges.

6.3 Thesis Unit Registration

Prior to enrollment in EE 5599 Design Project-Thesis, students must secure advisor approval and obtain electronic signatures on the required EE Thesis Permission Form. The thesis component comprises 6 total units, typically distributed as 2 and 4 units across two consecutive semesters, though alternative distributions may be approved by the thesis advisor based on project requirements.

Students must not register for thesis units unless they have:

- A clearly defined research scope and methodology.
- A confirmed faculty member to serve as thesis advisor.

- Adequate resources (financial, equipment, and facilities) to support completion of the project.

Students whose thesis work extends beyond their final semester of EE 5599 enrollment will receive an "RP" (Report Pending) grade. Students have up to one year to complete and defend their thesis before the RP grade converts to a Failed grade ("F"). During intervening semesters, students must maintain continuous enrollment through GS 5597 registration for at least one unit per semester (see Section 5.2).

6.4 Thesis Committee

Students must assemble a thesis committee of at least three faculty members (including the thesis advisor) prior to thesis defense. The thesis advisor serves as committee chair, with additional members selected in consultation with the advisor.

Departmental representation requirements are as follows:

- Minimum two committee members from the Electrical Engineering Department;
- One member may represent a related discipline (Mathematics, Computer Science, Physics, other Engineering fields) when appropriate to the research topic;
- When the thesis advisor is a Computer Engineering faculty member, both additional committee members must be from the Electrical Engineering Department.

Thesis committee members are expected to:

- Participate in thesis proposal presentations and provide constructive feedback
- Conduct thorough review of the thesis document prior to oral defense
- Develop appropriate questions for the oral examination
- Provide detailed feedback on technical content, exposition quality, and formatting
- Evaluate the overall merit of the research, thesis document, and oral defense performance
- Determine thesis approval status: approved, conditionally approved pending specified revisions, or rejected

Committee members with substantive concerns regarding thesis content or research quality should communicate these issues to the thesis advisor prior to the scheduled defense to allow for appropriate remediation or rescheduling.

6.5 Thesis Proposal Presentation

The thesis proposal presentation enables students to demonstrate the quality, feasibility, and academic merit of their proposed research while receiving constructive feedback from committee members. This presentation also allows committee members to assess whether the proposed research aligns sufficiently with their expertise to enable effective participation.

The presentation typically occurs during committee formation, no later than one semester before the thesis defense. While thesis advisors may exercise discretion regarding the thesis proposal requirement, committee members may condition their participation based on the proposal presentation.

Presentation Format and Content

Students are responsible for scheduling the presentation at a time convenient for all committee members. The presentation session is scheduled for 50 minutes, with a 20-minute overview of the proposed research addressing:

- Significance and motivation of the proposed study
- Research scope, objectives, and anticipated contributions
- Review of relevant literature and previous research findings
- Preliminary work completed and initial observations
- Specific research questions and hypotheses to be investigated
- Project timeline with anticipated completion dates for major milestones
- Bibliography of reviewed references

The proposal presentation is followed by a 30-minute committee discussion during which members provide questions, suggestions, and guidance.

6.6 Thesis Oral Defense

The oral defense must be completed prior to final thesis document submission. All thesis committee members must attend the defense.

As an academic institution, Cal Poly emphasizes the generation and dissemination of knowledge as an essential component of master's thesis work. Accordingly, the Electrical Engineering Department requires that thesis defenses be open and public. Defenses must be advertised in advance and welcome attendance by interested faculty, students, and members of the public.

Students coordinate scheduling, room reservations, and announcements through the EE Department Office. Defense announcements must be distributed via email and posted flyers at least one week in advance.

The oral defense is typically scheduled for *two hours* with the following components:

i. Thesis Oral Presentation: Student presents thesis research (40–50 minutes, open to faculty and students)

ii. Public Question Period: Questions from attending faculty, students, and committee members (10–15 minutes)

iii. Closed Committee Examination: Private questioning session with thesis committee and thesis student only (20–45 minutes)

iv. Committee Deliberation: Committee discussion and decision (10–30 minutes, committee only)

Closed-Door Defense Exception

In limited circumstances involving proprietary industry research or national security considerations, a student may request a closed-door defense. Such requests are reviewed by the graduate committee on a case-by-case basis and will only be considered when a valid Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) is in place that involves Cal Poly as a party to the agreement, executed through the Office of Research.

NDAs signed only between a student, advisor, and external company, without university involvement, are not sufficient grounds for a closed-door defense. Students and faculty advisors who anticipate that thesis work may involve proprietary information are strongly encouraged to consult with the Office of Research as early as possible, ideally before the research begins.

Note that a closed-door defense is a separate matter from placing the thesis under embargo in Digital Commons. Students may request a temporary embargo for other reasons, such as pending publications or planned patent filings, without requiring a closed-door defense.

6.7 Thesis Document Preparation and Review

Students must adhere to the *Master's Thesis Formatting Guidelines* available through the Graduate Education website at https://grad.calpoly.edu/masters-thesis/masters-thesis.html. Official thesis templates are provided to ensure compliance with university standards.

Students are strongly encouraged to develop the thesis document incrementally throughout the research process rather than deferring writing until project completion. Thesis advisors may require draft submissions as part of EE 5599 grade evaluation in early semesters.

Students must provide a complete thesis draft to their advisor *at least four weeks* before the intended defense date. This timeline allows for thorough advisor review and incorporation of recommended revisions before distribution to committee members.

Following advisor feedback and approval, students must provide a revised, complete thesis document to all committee members *at least two weeks* before the scheduled oral defense.

6.8 Thesis Approval Process

Final thesis approval involves two distinct components:

i. *Content Approval*: Thesis committee evaluation of technical content, methodology, and conclusions

ii. *Format Approval*: Graduate Education Office verification of compliance with university formatting standards

Following committee review and oral defense, students typically receive requests from the committee members for document revisions addressing content clarification, technical accuracy, exposition quality, or editorial corrections. The committee may require additional review of revised materials or delegate final approval authority to the thesis advisor.

Upon thesis committee approval, students must obtain committee signatures on the Master's Culminating Experience Approval E-form by the final day of their intended graduation semester.

Complete submission procedures are detailed in the *Master's Thesis Submission Process* documentation available through the Graduate Education website:
https://grad.calpoly.edu/masters-thesis/masters-thesis.html

7 Exam-Based MS Track

The exam-based track provides an alternative pathway to the MSEE degree with a *comprehensive exam* serving as the culminating experience. Beginning Fall 2026, the comprehensive exam is administered through *EE 5597 (Comprehensive Examination)*, a 1-unit, project-based course taken in the student's final semester of graduate study.

7.1 Course Format

EE 5597 is a 1-unit, lab-like course graded *Credit/No Credit* (CR/NC), with a scheduled 3-hour weekly meeting. Sections are organized by technical area, and each student completes an *individual* project (team projects are not permitted) under the guidance of the section instructor. Students are expected to attend the scheduled weekly session; individualized or alternate meeting times are not supported. A student may enroll in EE 5597 at most twice (one retake is permitted if the first attempt is unsuccessful).

7.2 Technical Areas

Students select one of the following technical areas for their comprehensive exam:

i. Signals, Systems, DSP, and Communications
ii. Control Systems and Computational Intelligence
iii. Electronics and Integrated Circuits
iv. RF Electronics, Physical Layer Communications, Antennas, Electromagnetics, THz, & Photonics
v. Power Systems and Power Electronics

7.3 Eligibility and Enrollment

Before taking EE 5597, students must have completed (or be concurrently enrolled in) at least *two 5000-level courses* in their selected technical area; 4000-level courses from the Core list within the area may also count toward this requirement. Students may be expected to complete targeted self-study to fill any gaps needed to execute their project.

To request a permission number for the section associated with their selected technical area, students must complete and submit the Adobe Sign form linked below during the regular registration period: EE Comprehensive Exam Permission Form

7.4 Project and Deliverables

Projects are scoped to a 1-unit graduate-level culminating experience (not a thesis or senior-design-scale effort) and are expected to be primarily simulation-, analysis-, or design-review-based;

hardware-based work may be permitted only when it can be completed using existing departmental resources and within the standard timeline.

All sections share a common set of milestones and deliverables:

- *Milestones*: project proposal, midterm checkpoint, and final submission.
- *Written report*: literature review, problem statement and objectives, methodology, validation and results, discussion and limitations, and references.
- *Final demo and presentation*, plus reproducible artifacts (code, design files, data) as applicable.

7.5 Assessment

Student work is evaluated using a shared rubric across sections, covering technical correctness, depth within the area scope, quality and relevance of the literature review, methodology and validation, quality of written documentation, and communication of results. Final reports, rubrics, and outcome records are submitted by the section instructor to the Graduate Coordinator for retention in an internal departmental repository; reports are not uploaded to Cal Poly Digital Commons.

7.6 Academic Requirements

Students pursuing the Exam-Based MS track must clearly indicate selection of the comprehensive "Exam" option on both their *Working Formal Study Plan* and *Final Formal Study Plan* documents. The study plan must comprise a minimum of 30 units of degree-applicable coursework, excluding any thesis units.

Students must successfully complete all 30 units specified in their Formal Study Plan by the conclusion of the semester in which they plan to take the Comprehensive Exam.

Students must meet the following academic standing requirements to be eligible for the comprehensive examination:

- Maintenance of good academic standing (not on academic probation)
- Achievement of a minimum 3.0 cumulative grade point average in all coursework listed on the Formal Study Plan

Students on academic probation or with a cumulative GPA below 3.0 in their graduate coursework will not be permitted to attempt the comprehensive exam until academic deficiencies are resolved and good standing is restored.

8 Department Facilities and Resources Available to MSEE Students

Graduate students engaged in thesis research and special projects may be assigned dedicated workspace within EE Department laboratories. Workspace allocation is determined based on research requirements, project scope, and laboratory capacity.

Students participating in sponsored research projects are typically assigned workspace in facilities designated for their specific project. Research activities may be conducted in various locations

including Advanced Technology Laboratories (ATL) research facility, Bonderson Building research areas, or specialized departmental laboratories aligned with project requirements.

All MS Electrical Engineering students have access to the EE Graduate Lab (Room 20-121). Teaching Associates have priority for office hours and lab preparation. To request lab and key access, submit the Grad Lab Access Request Form for access authorization and key privileges.

Graduate students may have access to additional departmental resources and specialized equipment based on their research needs and thesis requirements. Students should consult with their thesis advisor and the Graduate Coordinator regarding access to specific facilities and equipment necessary for their research projects.

9 Financial Assistance and Support Opportunities

9.1 Teaching Associate Positions

The Electrical Engineering Department offers paid Teaching Associate (TA) positions for qualified graduate students to serve as instructors for selected undergraduate laboratory courses. These positions typically involve instruction of introductory circuits and electronics laboratories for non-major students.

Teaching Associate appointments are limited to students demonstrating satisfactory academic performance and adequate progress toward degree completion. Students may teach a maximum of one laboratory section per semester.

To be considered for a Teaching Associate position, applicants must meet the following minimum academic standards:

i. A minimum *B average* in undergraduate circuits lecture coursework and in undergraduate electronics lecture coursework.
ii. A minimum *B+ average* in undergraduate circuits laboratory coursework and in undergraduate electronics laboratory coursework.

Continued appointment as a Teaching Associate requires:

i. Earning a minimum 3.3 GPA during the teaching semester
ii. Written confirmation from thesis advisor (for thesis-track students) documenting satisfactory progress toward MS thesis

Applications for Teaching Associate positions should be submitted to the Electrical Engineering Department Office.

9.2 Research Assistantships

Faculty-sponsored research projects frequently provide Research Assistant (RA) opportunities for graduate students. These positions may include stipend support, particularly for students whose thesis research aligns with sponsored project objectives.

Students interested in research assistantship opportunities should inquire with the Electrical Engineering Department Office and individual faculty members regarding current availability.

9.3 Grader and Laboratory Assistant Positions

Hourly wage positions for graders and laboratory assistants are typically available each semester (excluding summer). Position announcements are posted by the department at the beginning of each semester, with selection made by individual course instructors.

These positions are available to both graduate students and advanced undergraduates; therefore, employment is not guaranteed each semester. Work hour requirements vary by position and are determined by the hiring faculty member.

9.4 External Financial Support

Current and prospective graduate students may apply for financial aid and Cal Poly scholarships through the Cal Poly Financial Aid Office. Application procedures and deadlines are available through the Financial Aid website: https://www.calpoly.edu/financial-aid

Furthermore, the Cal Poly Graduate Education Office administers several financial support programs, including: Graduate Teaching and Graduate Assistant programs; Resident and Non-resident Tuition Waiver programs; Graduate Equity Fellowship Program; and Additional fellowship and scholarship opportunities. Comprehensive information regarding these programs, including application procedures and eligibility requirements, is available at: https://grad.calpoly.edu/resources/financial-opportunities/financial-opportunities.html.

10 Academic Progress Checklist

Students are responsible for initiation, completion, and submission of all required academic forms according to established deadlines. Failure to complete and submit forms at the appropriate times may result in delays to program completion and degree conferral.

All required forms are available for download from the Graduate Education website at: https://grad.calpoly.edu/checklist-forms/steps-to-graduation.html

Required Milestones and Deadlines:

→ ***First semester:*** Submit the Working Formal Study Plan and Advancement to Candidacy form during Weeks 1–5

→ ***For the thesis-based track:*** Present the thesis proposal to the thesis committee at least one semester before the thesis defense (this presentation is not mandatory, but is recommended and subject to the discretion of the advisor and committee)

→ ***Final semester:*** Submit the Request for Degree Evaluation form during Weeks 1–5

→ ***Final semester:*** Submit the Final Formal Study Plan within the first five weeks of the graduation semester

→ ***Final semester:*** Submit the Master's Culminating Experience Approval form upon successful completion of thesis defense or comprehensive exam (due by the last day of the term of completion)