GRADUATE ACADEMIC POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Election of Bulletin Requirements

A graduate student must meet the department curriculum requirements published in the University Bulletin in the semester the student was admitted and enrolled. Programs that have enacted curriculum changes after publication of the Bulletin must notify students in writing of any changes in degree requirements at the time of enrollment. Updates in requirements may be published in the online Bulletin, the department student handbook, and/or in program advising materials. Continuing students must be notified by the department chair or graduate coordinator in writing with return receipt required indicating the student’s knowledge of the changes. Students readmitted to a graduate program after an absence of two consecutive regular semesters must meet the requirements of the program in place during the semester of their readmission.

Doctoral Degree Requirements

Students accepted into one of the two doctoral degrees at SF State offered jointly with the University of California and students in the Ed.D. in Educational Leadership 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. Review the department/program information in this Bulletin or contact the department office directly for specific requirements and program information for all doctoral degrees.

Master’s Degree Requirements

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 course requirements leading to the degree (refer to program materials in this Bulletin and graduate program handbooks for department requirements);
• Complete a Culminating Experience defined by the department/program and approved by the University.

Written English Proficiency Requirement

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 (#S16–014) 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 semester of enrollment. Typical Level I written requirements may include a 4.06.0 or above on the Analytic Writing Assessment of the GRE or the GMAT, a score of at least 4.5/6.0 on the essay test of the paper-based [PBT] TOEFL, a minimum score of 24/30 on the Writing section of iBT TOEFL, a score of at least 6.5/9.0 on the IELTS writing test, a department placement exam, writing samples, or creative works portfolio as determined by the department. Level I written English proficiency requirements are set by the academic department. Students who do not meet the Level I English Proficiency requirement at the time of admission may be conditionally admitted by the academic department with clear expectations that the student will meet the Level I English Proficiency requirement during the first semester of attendance.

Units completed by a student to reach Level I competency may not be counted on the Advancement to Candidacy (ATC) form. Students who, within the first semester 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 completion of the Culminating Experience or may be related to a designated writing intensive course taken prior to the Culminating Experience.

The Advancement to Candidacy (ATC)

The plan of study that must be completed prior to award of the degree is documented on the Advancement to Candidacy (ATC) form. The form must be submitted to the Division of Graduate Studies 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) form must be approved by the graduate major advisor and the graduate coordinator/chair of the student’s department or program. The form is submitted to the dean of the Division of Graduate Studies for evaluation and approval. Upon approval of the ATC, the student is advanced to candidacy and classified status. Students who have submitted their ATC forms can check on their Advancement to Candidacy status by accessing the Student Center from SF State Gateway at the SF State login page (http://www.sfsu.edu/login.htm).

Forms are available on the Graduate Studies website and are specific to each degree program. Forms must be completed online and downloaded for signature and submission. Handwritten forms will not be accepted.

Any change in the ATC requires that the student submit to the Division of Graduate Studies office a Petition for ATC Course Substitution, including all required signatures. Required core courses listed in the Bulletin for a degree must be regularly offered. In the rare cases this is not possible because of budgetary issues or curricular changes, file the Waiver for Graduate Program Regulation Form. An 899 Independent Study course may not be substituted for a core or required course for the degree. An ATC core course substitution must be approved prior to enrolling in substituting course.

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

Units Included on ATC must include:

• 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 graduated-level courses:
  • Fifty percent (50%) of the units from exclusively graduate level courses (700-899 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:
  • Thirty percent (30%) of the units on the ATC in some graduate programs may be from upper division undergraduate courses. Graduate students enrolled in undergraduate courses must complete additional coursework as specified by the instructor.
• 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 six units from any combination of Open University (CEL) work, credit by examination, and/or transfer work for the requirement of a 30 unit program and proportionally more for programs that exceed 30 units (e.g., a maximum of 12 semester units may be used in meeting the requirement of a 60 unit program if accepted by the program).

• No more than six units of credit in 899 Independent Study courses (699 not permitted) related to the degree objective. The 899 Independent Study may only be included on the ATC as an elective and cannot be used to substitute core required courses.

• No more than 30 percent (e.g., nine units on a 30 unit program) of the work with CR grades, including any transfer units.

• No more than six units of credit in experimental courses (874, 877).

• Undergraduate equivalents of these courses are not permitted on the ATC.

• No more than four graduate student teaching units applicable to the discipline (e.g. ENG 804, E ED 746, PT 960, IAPN 780, PLSI 781, etc.) may be included.

• 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 six units of 899 work on their ATC.

• No prerequisite course work may be used to meet degree requirements.

• No units used to obtain a previously awarded degree.

An ATC remains valid only if the student maintains continuous enrollment with the University, as defined in the Bulletin. 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. If readmitted, the student must complete a new ATC that meets current university and program curricular requirements. Students who do not complete all required coursework, the written English proficiency requirement (Levels I and II), and the Culminating Experience within the seven-year time limit should refer to the Progress Toward Degree (p. 4) section of this Bulletin.

Grading Standards on the ATC

• Both a cumulative GPA of 3.0 in all post-baccalaureate work taken at SF State AND an overall ATC GPA of 3.0 (coursework listed on the ATC) is required.

• 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.

• The ATC may include only courses with grades of C or better (grades of C– and lower may not be included). Some programs require grades of B or better on the ATC. Students are responsible for checking requirements with their graduate coordinator or department chair.

• Grades earned by international 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.

• Graduate students in CR/NC courses must earn a B– or better to be granted a CR grade.

• A grade of RP is given for a Culminating Experience course until completed.

For General information on University grading standards, refer to the Grading Policy and Systems (bulletin.sfsu.edu/policies-procedures/grading) section of this Bulletin.

Units in Residence for ATC

• At least 24 of 30 units must be taken in residence on this campus or proportionally more for programs that exceed 30 units.

• Summer Semester academic units are counted as residence credit.

English Proficiency

The ATC must specify how the student has met the Level I and Level II written English proficiency requirement in accordance with the regulations of the department.

Culminating Experience

The ATC must specify the Culminating Experience and any additional oral or written exam requirements. (review Culminating Experience Requirements).

Culminating Experience Requirements

In accordance with Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations, the Culminating Experience must be met by the satisfactory completion of a thesis, special project, comprehensive examination, or a combination of more than one of these. An oral defense of the work is normally required.

Students must file a Proposal for Culminating Experience (PCE) (http://grad.sfsu.edu/content/current-students/culminating-experience-procedures) that has been approved by program faculty. This form must be submitted subsequent to or simultaneous with the ATC. Both the PCE and ATC forms require original faculty signatures. No stamped or scanned signatures are accepted. Students are not permitted to enroll in a Culminating Experience course until both of these forms have been approved by Graduate Studies. A Report of Completion of the Culminating Experience (Culminating Experience form and/or Receipt for Thesis or Written Creative Work defense of the work is normally required.

If changes occur in the project content, purpose, or research methods prior to completion of the Culminating Experience, a revised Proposal for Culminating Experience form must be submitted to the Division of Graduate Studies. If the type of Culminating Experience course changes after approval of the ATC and the Proposal for Culminating Experience, both a revised Proposal for Culminating Experience form and an ATC Substitution form must be submitted to the Division of Graduate Studies.

Title changes to the Proposal for Culminating Experience, after initial approval, must be requested through a Title Change Form (http://grad.sfsu.edu/sites/default/files/assets/forms/title-change-for-ce.pdf). Use the revised Proposal for Culminating Experience form if project’s content, purpose, or research methods change.

The types of Culminating Experience options to meet degree requirements are determined by the programs with approval of the Division of Graduate Studies. Typical Culminating Experience options are:

Seminar: Culminating Experience Seminar (890)

The 890 culminating experience course is not available for most programs. Check the department/program Bulletin information or handbook. The seminar may require a culminating paper, presentation, or exam. This requirement must show evidence of the application of knowledge and techniques learned in the field of study. This course requires additional supervision by the CE faculty. See program handbook for information. Most departments or programs provide manuals or information about the major-specific requirements. A Report of Completion form...
must be filed in Graduate Studies by the deadline date stated in the University calendar.

**Supervised Field Internships (892)**
A supervised field internship involves the placement of the student in a work experience situation culminating in a written report addressing the significance, objectives, methodology, and a conclusion. An oral defense of the report may be required by the department. A Report of Completion form must be filed in Graduate Studies by the deadline date stated in the University calendar.

**Written Creative Work (893)**
This Culminating Experience requirement is restricted to graduate students in the Creative Writing program and may consist of a short story, novel, series of poems, and/or play in which students demonstrate a unique style of writing. An annotation page must be completed and filed as a part of the final work. Students completing a written creative work should review and follow the Guidelines for Formatting and Submitting Written Creative Works (available at grad.sfsu.edu/content/current-students/thesis (http://grad.sfsu.edu/content/current-students/thesis)). This written creative work is a published product and will be maintained on file in the library. Students must obtain a Receipt for Thesis or Written Creative Work form in Graduate Studies by the deadline date stated in the University calendar. Formatting of the creative written work must be reviewed by Graduate Studies well in advance so any adjustments in formatting can be made before the deadline.

**Creative Work Project (894)**
This Culminating Experience may be a musical composition, a group of paintings, a performance, a film, a learning module, a design project, or other creative endeavor by an individual student, as specified by the program. A Report of Completion form must be filed in Graduate Studies by the deadline date stated in the University calendar. These projects must be described in a written document that summarizes the project’s significance, objectives, creative methodology, and a conclusion. An oral defense of the project may be required. Note: MUS 894 for students with the composition emphasis requires that a bound copy of the music manuscript be filed with the library; consequently both a Report of Completion and a Receipt for Thesis or Written Creative Work are required.

**Field Study or Applied Research Project (895)**
This Culminating Experience is a field study or research project by an individual student that incorporates the application of knowledge and techniques acquired in the student’s program of study. The field study or research project must be described in a written document which includes the project’s significance, objectives, methodology, and a conclusion. With faculty permission, the finished document may be formatted in the manner of a discipline-specific journal ready for publication.

An oral defense of the project may be required. A Report of Completion form must be filed in Graduate Studies by the deadline date stated in the University calendar.

**Comprehensive Examination (896EXM)**
The comprehensive examination is a written examination that is prepared and administered by the major department so students can demonstrate their ability to integrate the content knowledge, independent thinking, and critical analysis, and, as may be appropriate, the accuracy of documentation. In most disciplines, students must also enroll in 896EXM (0 units), which is the marker that informs the graduate division that the comprehensive examination has been successfully satisfied. The results of the examination (pass or fail) must be reported to the Division of Graduate Studies on a Report of Completion form by the deadline date indicated in the University calendar.

**Thesis (898)/Dissertation (998)**
A thesis/dissertation is the written product of an original study by an individual student. It demonstrates clarity of purpose, critical and independent thinking, and accurate and thorough documentation. An oral or written defense of the thesis/dissertation may be required. Students completing a thesis/dissertation should review and follow the Guidelines for Formatting and Submitting a Master’s Thesis found on the Graduate Studies website (http://grad.sfsu.edu/content/current-students/thesis). Thesis and Dissertation formatting must be reviewed by the Division of Graduate Studies in advance of the deadline so any adjustments in formatting can be made by the final date of submission for the graduating term. The thesis/dissertation is a published product and will be maintained on file electronically in the J. Paul Leonard Library. Students must file a thesis/dissertation receipt form in Graduate Studies by the deadline date stated in the University calendar.

**Joint/Group Culminating Experience Projects and Theses**
The Culminating Experience is usually the expression of a single student’s work – a thesis (898), a dissertation (998), and a written creative work (893) must have a single author; however, the University recognizes that there are some circumstances that warrant joint/group projects. At no time will more than three students be able to submit a joint/group project.

Each student participating in the joint/group project must have separate responsibilities, and these must be reviewed, endorsed, and subsequently evaluated by the students’ Culminating Experience committee members. Each student must complete a separate Culminating Experience Proposal, but they must be submitted jointly for review. Each proposal must have an attachment that includes:

- A list of the separate research areas/responsibilities of each student
- A statement of the identifiable written component of the work to be completed by each student
- The signatures of each student and the committee chair.

A Joint Project Statement form is available on the Graduate Studies website (http://www.sfsu.edu/~gradstdy/joint-projects-statement.htm).

If human or animal research is involved, students may submit one set of the research protocol documents but must list all participating students on the Protocol Approval Form.

**Composition of Student’s 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 many programs require three members.
- The chair and the second member of the committee should hold tenured/tenure-track faculty appointments in the major department.
- In circumstances where special expertise is available in another department, the graduate dean may authorize a designated tenured/tenure-track faculty member from a related department to serve as the first or second reader.
- With special permission from the dean of Graduate Studies, some long-term lecturers, FERPs, selected faculty emeriti, or research collaborators with terminal degrees in their field or with special expertise may be approved as the second reviewer, provided their current curriculum vitae is on file in Graduate Studies. Due to the temporary nature of these special appointments, both the student and the lecturer must understand the risk to the timely completion of the Culminating Experience. An agreement form, establishing when a retired or FERP faculty member is available to work with the student, is available on the Graduate Studies website, found here: FERP Emeritus Thesis Agreement pdf download (http://grad.sfsu.edu/sites/sites7.sfsu.edu/grad/files/assets/forms/ferp-emeritus-agreement.pdf). It must
be signed by both the student and committee member and submitted along with the Culminating Experience Proposal form.

- Lecturers or experts in the field from off-campus universities, industry or research facilities may serve as a third member of a student’s committee if they have extensive expertise in the area under study. A current curriculum vitae must be on file in Graduate Studies.

- 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 during 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 Revision form (http://grad.sfsu.edu/sites/default/files/assets/forms/petition-for-committee-revision.pdf) to Graduate Studies.

Human and Animal Protections Requirements

Any research conducted by a student that involves humans, vertebrate animals, or biological specimens (e.g., tissues, stem cells/cell lines, blood) requires approval at SF State, even though that research may have been approved at another institution and/or takes place at another location. There are no exceptions. A student whose work involves humans, vertebrate animals, or biological specimens (e.g., tissues, stem cells/cell lines, blood) is not permitted to begin data collection without the approval of the Division of Graduate Studies.

Before beginning any research with humans, vertebrate animals, or biological specimens (e.g., tissues, stem cells/cell lines, blood), students must review the Human and Animal Protections (Office of Research and Sponsored Programs/HAP) website (http://research.sfsu.edu/protocol) for institutional regulations. This is a federal requirement.

Registration and Grading Procedures for Culminating Experience Courses

To register for a Culminating Experience course, a student must have a 3.0 GPA in all post-baccalaureate course work completed, as well as an approved Advancement to Candidacy (ATC) form and Proposal for Culminating Experience (PCE) form on file in Graduate Studies. Status of the ATC and Proposal for Culminating Experience approval can be found by accessing SF State Gateway on the web.

A student who does not complete the Culminating Experience after the “grace” semester following enrollment in the Culminating Experience course, is required to maintain continuous enrollment either through the College of Extended Learning (CEL) or enroll in a regular university course on advisement of faculty. The student must enroll in a zero unit Culminating Experience Continuous Enrollment (http://grad.sfsu.edu/content/continuous-enrollment-requirement) courses through CEL, and adhere to the following processes:

- Enroll in the Culminating Experience Continuous Enrollment course under your college name: BUS 499, EDUC 499, ETXS 499, HSS 499, LCA 499 or SCI 499.

- Enroll in CEL 499 before the university’s add/drop deadline (the add/drop deadline can be found on the Registrar’s Office).

- Committee Chair should submit a grade change to the Registrar’s Office upon completion of Culminating Experience requirements.

Enrollment in the CEL, CE course provides students access to SFSU libraries, discipline-associated laboratories and facilities, and Culminating Experience advisors.

Proof of Completion

Completion paperwork will only be accepted with original faculty signatures and must indicate the date the culminating experience requirements were completed. The completion date of the Culminating Experience must meet deadline requirements for the term and application for graduation is filed (last date of final exams). If not, the student will be denied graduation and must reapply and pay the Application for Award of Degree fee again for the subsequent term.

Dates of Completion

The Culminating Experience and all other requirements must be met by the last day of final exams. All dates of completion are posted on the Division of Graduate Studies website (http://grad.sfsu.edu/content/student-deadlines).

Application for Graduation

Candidates for degree must file an application for graduation in accordance with the University calendar. Degree candidates must have both an approved Advancement to Candidacy (ATC) form and Proposal for Culminating Experience (PCE) form on file and a cumulative and an overall ATC GPA of a 3.0 or higher to be eligible to apply for graduation. Students can check ATC and CE approval status through the Student Center by accessing SF State Gateway on the web.

The Application for Award of the Graduate Degree must be completed online by accessing SF State Gateway on the web. It is the student’s responsibility to verify the correct diploma name and address at the point of submitting an application for award of degree. Any errors on the diploma that need correction after issuance will result in additional reissuance fees.

Students graduate at the end of any semester – fall, spring, or summer. The Graduate Commencement (graduation) ceremony occurs once a year at the end of May. Students who wish to participate in the University Commencement ceremony must rent a cap, gown, and hood from the SF State Bookstore. Students can link to the graduate student-specific Commencement website from the main University web page or on the Graduate Studies website for additional information.

If a candidate does not complete the requirements as planned in a particular semester, he/she must submit a new application for graduation and pay the application fee again to be considered in a subsequent semester. The Division of Graduate Studies cannot extend or switch terms for applications for graduation.

Progress Toward Degree

Graduate students must make continuous satisfactory progress toward their degree by completing a minimum of six units each year, not including summer session. Departments or programs have the right to require that students complete more than the six 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 disqualified by the department or the dean of Graduate Studies.

Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations requires that a master’s 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. This is the maximum time allowable. No extensions are granted past seven years. Students working full time should be able to complete a 30 unit program in five years, taking six units each year. Some programs requiring more than 30 units may take proportionally longer to complete, but no extensions will
be granted past 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. See department handbooks for requirements.

If coursework on the student’s Advancement to Candidacy (ATC) becomes outdated while the student is in good standing and making progress toward degree, the student may submit, with department approval, a petition to substitute another course (one already completed or which will be completed in the future) for the one which is outdated. This substitution is allowed only when the student is eligible for graduation.

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 and have validation for all expired coursework exceeding seven years. 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. Any courses to be used toward the degree will be determined jointly by the program and the dean of Graduate Studies. Outdated coursework (excluding transfer credits) may be validated by examination, retaking the course, substitution of coursework, demonstration of currency in the field, or other demonstration of competency in the relevant course or subject field as determined by the major department and approved by the dean of Graduate Studies.

Students who left the University after enrolling in the Culminating Experience must 1) submit a Petition for Extension for Seven-Year Limit; 2) reapply to the University; 3) submit documentation of progress on the Culminating Experience; and 4) enroll as a matriculated student or through the Continuous Enrollment program. Any student who has reached the seven-year limit and has not enrolled at the University for more than two semesters may be required to take additional coursework in the field. The Seven-Year Limit petition is filed with the dean of Graduate Studies. Transfer credit that exceeds seven years may not be used to meet degree requirements.

The following chart provides examples of the dates of expiration of the work specified on the ATC for the recommended five-year completion time with the maximum extension to the seven-year limitation:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Requirements on Graduate Admission</th>
<th>Five Year Completion Date</th>
<th>ATC Expiration Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2010</td>
<td>Spring 2015</td>
<td>January 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summer 2010</td>
<td>Summer 2015</td>
<td>June 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fall 2010</td>
<td>Fall 2015</td>
<td>August 2017</td>
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<td>Spring 2011</td>
<td>Spring 2016</td>
<td>January 2018</td>
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<td>June 2019</td>
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<td>Fall 2012</td>
<td>Fall 2017</td>
<td>August 2020</td>
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<td>Spring 2013</td>
<td>Spring 2018</td>
<td>January 2020</td>
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Planned Educational Leave of Absence

Continuing graduate students who have been officially admitted to, and who are actively pursuing a degree and/or credential program may qualify to absent themselves from enrollment in the institution for periods up to two academic years and still maintain the option of continuing student status. As a consequence of a leave of absence, it is expected that a student will improve his/her ability to complete the graduate degree program. A petition for the leave must clearly demonstrate that during the absence from the University the student will pursue educational activities relevant to his/her program. Requests for leave due to health, financial, or other personal reasons, or matriculation at another institution are not recognized for the purpose of granting a leave of absence. In the latter instances, students would need to reapply for admission when they are ready to resume their studies in the University. Continuing graduate students can be absent one fall or spring semester during a specific academic year and maintain their eligibility. Students do not have to submit an Application for Planned Educational Leave unless they plan to be absent for two consecutive semesters, excluding summer.

To be eligible for an educational leave of absence, a graduate student must:

- be a U.S. citizen or resident alien (foreign students ineligible);
- have been officially admitted to a master’s and/or credential program offered by the University;
- have an Advancement to Candidacy (ATC) on file in the Division of Graduate Studies office or plan to complete Credential Program on file in the Credentials Office in the College of Education;
- be in good academic standing;
- have completed acceptable course work (at least nine units) toward the identified objective prior to the effective date of the leave; and
- attach a plan of study showing a relationship with degree focus.

Such a planned academic leave does not change the beginning or ending dates of the seven-year completion of degree requirements for master’s degree candidates. For further information, contact the Division of Graduate Studies office.

Change of Graduate Program Concentration, or Credential

Changing from one graduate degree program to another or from one credential program to another is a serious decision that should be given thoughtful consideration. Graduate students who meet the eligibility requirements, must
apply to the new Graduate Program and formally be admitted to the new degree program, concentration, or credential. Only current graduate students who have a cumulative 3.0 grade point average in all coursework taken while in post-baccalaureate standing at SF State are eligible to apply to a new graduate program.

Students who wish to change concentrations within the same academic department must be in good academic standing and must fill out the Change of Graduate Program Concentration. Students are only permitted to change graduate program concentrations if the new concentration is in the same degree program. If a change of graduate program concentration is approved, a new ATC form is required.

If students wish to change from a master’s program to a credential-only program or from a credential-only to a master’s program, they must formally apply to the new credential or master’s program or credential, meet the eligibility requirements and follow the procedures as described.

To change a graduate program concentration or add a credential:

- Complete the Request for Change of Concentration (http://grad.sfsu.edu/content/current-students/change-graduate-program-form) form or a Request for Change of Credential Only.
- Attach transcripts from SF State and previous work to include last 60 units of coursework, and provide a transcript documenting an earned bachelor’s degree.
- Attach all supplemental admission materials requested by the new department.
- No more than 12 units of already completed courses can be counted toward the new graduate degree.

The new concentration coordinator/chair completes the department recommendation section of the form and submits it to the Division of Graduate Studies to determine if the student is in good standing (3.0 GPA) and to give final approval or denial. The University and department hold the right to refuse Change of Graduate Program Concentration or Credential requests and admission to a program based on programmatic, resource, faculty scholarship focus, and faculty/student academic needs.

**Academic Standards**

**Satisfactory Scholarship**

Graduate students are expected to develop their full potential as scholars and to maintain a 3.0 GPA (based on a 4.0) that indicates high scholastic ability and achievement. All courses completed by a student after award of the baccalaureate degree count in the overall graduate grade point average and are used in determining a student’s academic standing. The 3.0 GPA standard applies to all students in post-baccalaureate status including credential and second baccalaureate programs.

Only the grades of A, A–, B+, B–, C+, C, and CR are acceptable in courses on the Advancement to Candidacy (ATC) form. Graduate programs have the right to require specific grades (B or better) for specific courses that are appropriate to the discipline. Students taking upper-division undergraduate courses may be required by the program to earn a B or higher if counted on the ATC. Requirements for specific grades must be clearly indicated in writing in the Bulletin, on the program website or in student handbooks. Undergraduate level CR courses are not allowed on the ATC because the grade is translated as a C–. The number of ATC courses taken for CR grades is restricted (see ATC Grading Standards (p. 2) above).

**Incompletes**

Students who do not complete required coursework during the scheduled time period must complete a written contract with the instructor to complete the work within the next academic year or earlier as stipulated by the faculty member. For example, a course granted an incomplete in a fall semester must be completed and a grade submitted by the end of the next fall or earlier whether or not the student is enrolled in the University. Only students who are in good academic standing in the course and have completed at least 75 percent of the required coursework are eligible to contract for an incomplete. The incomplete is shown on the transcript as an I. If work is not completed during that period, the incomplete is changed to an IC (incomplete changed) that is calculated as an F (zero grade points). Graduate students planning to pursue a doctoral degree should consider that a pattern of incompletes, even if completed within the time period, may be viewed negatively by an admissions committee.

**Repeat of Courses as a Graduate Student**

A graduate student who has received a grade of B— or higher, or a grade of CR, may not repeat a course unless the course is described in the current SF State Bulletin as repeatable for credit. If a course is repeated, both grades remain on the transcript, and the GPA for both courses is averaged for the overall GPA. The higher grade is used on the Advancement to Candidacy form (ATC). Graduate students who receive a grade lower than B, or grades of IC, W, and WU, may repeat that course only once to earn a grade if a course repeat is permitted by the program. Requests by graduate students to repeat a course to improve the GPA are seldom granted by programs because it reflects lack of progress toward degree. Repeated attempts to achieve the required GPA to meet graduate standards are not allowed. Departments may refuse to allow the repeat of a course to improve the GPA.

**Attendance**

The instructor may consider regular attendance when assigning grades, and the requirement must be stated in writing as part of the course requirements. Most professional programs leading to licensure or certification require that students attend all class and laboratory sessions. See program handbooks for policies.

**Withdrawal from Courses**

Students may add or drop courses by Gator Registration without a W appearing on the transcript if they withdraw on or before the “drop” deadline. After the withdrawal deadline, a withdrawal will show as a W on the transcript. Students must check the university academic calendar for deadlines. Graduate students planning to pursue a doctoral degree should consider that a pattern of withdrawals may be viewed negatively by an admissions committee. Students who register for a class, but who do not attend or who drop the class without formally withdrawing, may be given a WU (withdrawal unauthorized), which is calculated as an F.

**Graduate Student Academic Standing**

All students who have earned an undergraduate degree and who are enrolled as graduate (classified or unclassified), credential, second baccalaureate and certificate (graduate and undergraduate) students are held to these academic standards.

**Good Standing**

Students must maintain a semester and cumulative grade point average of 3.0 (B) or better in every semester.

**Probation**

Students will be placed on academic probation if the overall, San Francisco State University, or semester grade point average 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. Students are notified by email of probationary standing and must meet with their academic advisor and complete the Graduate Probation Advising Form (http://grad.sfsu.edu/content/current-students/probation-and-mandatory-advising). After grades are published by the
Registrar at the end of the semester during which the student is on probation, one of two 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.

**Disqualification**

Students who are disqualified from the graduate, credential, or any certificate program and from further enrollment in the University may file for reinstatement by completing the Petition for Reinstatement Following Disqualification (http://grad.sfsu.edu/sites/default/files/assets/forms/petition-for-reinstatement-following-dq.pdf). Faculty and the program graduate coordinator may approve the student to continue the program for one semester or deny the student the option to continue in the program. Students approved to continue in the program must meet the stipulated requirements or conditions set forth by the program. Denial of a probation petition is the right of the faculty of the graduate program. Faculty may deem a student unable to continue the program and may not approve reinstatement even if a 3.0 GPA is achieved. Students reinstated after disqualification will not be allowed to enroll in classes for the following semester until grades have been posted. Following the posting of grades, students who attain a 3.0 will be allowed to register for classes in the Final Priority Registration period. Students who do not meet the 3.0 GPA requirement are disqualified and must improve the GPA through CEL. Review the Readmission of Disqualified Students (p. 7) section of this Bulletin for more information.

The student may not take lower division, non-academic or activity courses to improve their GPA. Coursework not related to the field of study, lower division courses or coursework completed at another university or college cannot be used to improve the GPA of an SF State graduate student who is on probation or disqualified.

**Administrative Probation**

A graduate degree, credential or certificate student may be placed on administrative probation by the Board of Appeals and Review or 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 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 the same or similar reason for which he/she was previously placed on administrative probation.
- In addition, an appropriate campus administrator 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 him/her unfit for the profession. In such cases, 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.

**Readmission of Disqualified Students**

Academically disqualified students may, after at least two semesters have elapsed, apply for readmission to the University providing evidence that they have removed the academic deficiencies, or resolved the problems which may have caused the disqualification. The work taken to eliminate an academic performance deficiency at this institution must be taken through the College of Extended Learning. Courses taken to improve the GPA may not be courses required for the degree, but should be relevant. If disqualification resulted from any other reasons than academic performance, approval must be obtained from the unit of the University which recommended the disqualification action. Students disqualified from another institution, including other CSU campuses, may not be admitted to SF State unless it can be demonstrated that the cause of the disqualification has been eliminated (additional coursework with good grades, etc.) and the student is otherwise eligible to return to the institution of disqualification. Readmission to the graduate program from which the student was disqualified is not guaranteed.

**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 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 decertification was related to conduct issues that interfere with campus interactions, declassified students are eligible to apply to a new program through CAL STATE APPLY, pay the application fee, and be accepted as a student by the department/program.

**Grievances and Appeals**

**Grade Appeals**

The grade appeal process is managed within the College offering the course under appeal. A student who feels the grade posted on the transcript is not a fair representation of the work completed may request a review by the instructor. The
request must be made during the semester of attendance or immediately following
the semester in which the grade was assigned. If the instructor and the student
can work out an agreement, a petition for a grade change can be submitted. If an
agreement is not reached, the student should consult with the department chair or
college dean for the formal procedures for filing a grade appeal. Students should
contact the department or college in which the class was offered for a copy of
the formal grade appeal process that is conducted at the college level. Refer to
senate.sfsu.edu/policy/grade-appeal-practices-procedures (http://senate.sfsu.edu/
policy/grade-appeal-practices-procedures).

Retroactive Withdrawal and Grade Change
Students may retroactively withdraw from the University or courses for serious
and compelling reasons or in verified cases of extenuating circumstances (e.g.,
accident, illness, etc.) that prevented submission of a regular withdrawal petition
by the deadline in the Class Schedule. A student wishing to request a retroactive
grade change must initiate the request during the semester in attendance
immediately following the semester when the original grade was assigned or
the course in question was offered. A retroactive withdrawal or grade change
cannot be used as a way to improve poor academic performance in a course(s) or
remove “F” grades due to academic dishonesty. For more detailed procedures
and appropriate petition forms, refer to dos.sfsu.edu/content/sf-state-student-
withdrawal-services (http://dos.sfsu.edu/content/sf-state-student-withdrawal-services)

Grievance Procedures
A graduate student who has problems arising from academic evaluation, degree
requirements, or general policies and procedures are strongly encouraged to
follow the informal concerns and complaints process as outlined at sfedu/
~vpsa/complaints (http://www.sfsu.edu/~vpsa/complaints). Graduate students
should discuss grievances first with a graduate major advisor or graduate
coordinator Graduate coordinators are listed on the Graduate Studies website
(http://grad.sfsu.edu/content/graduate-coordinators). If a student wishes to appeal
decision, he/she should then consult with the department chair, the college dean
or the dean of Graduate Studies, in that order. Should questions arise beyond this
point, the University dean of students or designee may be consulted for advice.

If after following the informal process, the concern or complaint remains
unresolved, students may pursue a formal complaint. For questions about
the process, contact Eugene R. Chelberg, Associate Vice President for
Student Affairs/Enrollment Management, SSB 403, (415) 338–2916
or concerns@sfsu.edu.

Graduate Student Achievement Opportunities
California State University Research Competition
Each spring semester, the CSU Student Research Competition provides an
opportunity for both undergraduate and graduate students to present their
outstanding research projects and creative works in a refereed or formal academic
competition. Students who are currently enrolled, as well as those who graduated
in the previous spring, summer, or fall semesters, are eligible. The system-wide
competition is held at a different CSU campus in May of each academic year
and the application deadlines are in mid-February. SF State will select up to
10 campus winners to compete in the CSU system-wide competition. SF State
students have done very well in this competition in the past. Winners receive cash
awards.

Graduate Research and Creative Works Showcase
The Graduate Research and Creative Works Showcase is an annual exhibition of
the diverse work of SF State’s innovative and talented graduate students. Student
presentations are typically in the form of a poster or visual display that depicts

Graduate Student Award for Distinguished Achievement
This award is conferred on master and doctoral students who have a distinguished
record of academic performance and degree-related service in their graduate
program. Selection for the award is based on criteria that include academic
performance, scholarly work, and service determined meritorious by the faculty
in the respective graduate program areas. Criteria utilized vary from discipline to
discipline consistent with standards of excellence. The selection of the awardees
for the year is made each spring by the faculty of each department. Recipients are
recognized at the Graduate Recognition Ceremony in May and are issued a
Certificate of Achievement. The award is noted on the student’s official SF State
transcript.

Western Association of Graduate Schools Thesis
Competition and Technology Innovation Award
Each spring the Division of Graduate Studies invites students to submit their
master’s theses and dissertations to compete for the WAGS master’s Thesis
Award or WAGS Technology Innovation Award. These prestigious awards
represent the best and highest quality of master’s and doctoral student work. One
nominee for each award will be submitted by SF State to WAGS to compete with
student entries from western universities and colleges in the United States and
Canada. The national winner is awarded prize money and a trip to the WAGS
annual conference.