

Prohibited Coursework. Courses used to fulfill General Education curriculum (Foundation, Breadth, Integration or Multicultural/International), undergraduate writing "W" courses, lower-division courses, professional (300-level) courses, and courses used to fulfill the requirements for another degree may not be used in fulfillment of the program requirements for the graduate degree.

Outdated Courses. Courses older than five years may not be included on the Petition of Advancement to Candidacy and used to fulfill requirements toward the master's degree.

Independent Study Courses. A maximum of 6 (one-fifth of the total program units) independent study (190 or 290) units may be approved for use toward a 30-unit master's degree. (See Independent Study section under Academic Placement.)

Graduate-Level Courses. A minimum of 70 percent of the courses listed on the Petition of Advancement to Candidacy for use toward the graduate degree must be graduate-level courses numbered in the 200-series. Most programs require more than the minimum.

Substitutions. Substitutions for required program courses or for other departmental requirements must be approved by the student's graduate program coordinator/director and listed on the Petition of Advancement to Candidacy. Substitutions might require additional written justification.

Program Adjustments

It is the student's responsibility to complete the specific courses listed on his or her Petition of Advancement to Candidacy (master's program) or the Proposed Program for the Certificate of Advanced Study (advanced certificate program). Once a program has been approved by the University Graduate Committee, it may be changed only on the written request of the student and his or her graduate program advisor (if required) and coordinator/director, and with the approval of the dean, Division of Research and Graduate Studies. Program Adjustment Request forms for degree and certificate programs are available in the Division of Research and Graduate Studies, Frank W. Thomas Building, Room 130, or on the website at www.fresnostate.edu/academics/gradstudies.

Doctoral students should consult the appropriate program for information regarding advancement to candidacy policies.

Culminating Experience

A culminating experience is required for each graduate degree. Acceptable culminating experiences include thesis (299), project (298), or comprehensive examination. Individual departments permit one or more culminating experiences described in this section. Students who have enrolled in thesis or project units will not be permitted to change to another culminating experience after the initial semester of such enrollment. Students must be advanced to candidacy before enrolling in project or thesis units, or before taking the comprehensive exam.

1. A thesis is the written product of the systematic study of a significant problem. It clearly 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 must evidence originality, critical and independent thinking, appropriate organization and format, clarity of purpose, and accurate and thorough documentation. Normally, an oral defense of the thesis will be required.
2. A project is a significant undertaking of a pursuit appropriate to the fine and applied arts or to professional fields. It must evidence originality and independent thinking, appropriate form and organization, and a rationale. It must be described and summarized in a written abstract that includes the project's significance, objectives, methodology, and a conclusion or recommendation. An oral defense of the project may be required.
3. A comprehensive examination is an assessment of the student's ability to integrate the knowledge of the area, show critical and independent thinking, and demonstrate mastery of the subject matter. The results of the examination must evidence appropriate organization, critical analysis, and accuracy of documentation. A record of the examination questions and responses shall be maintained.

Doctoral students should obtain information on the culminating experience(s) from the appropriate doctoral program.

Criteria for Thesis and Project

No academic distinction is made between a thesis and a project. Either one is equally acceptable as a means of fulfilling the requirements for the graduate degree. Specific departmental instructions or requirements should, however, be ascertained by the candidate before enrollment in courses 298 or 299. The instructor of record for thesis or project must issue a letter grade on the Graduate Degree Clearance form through the Division of Research and Graduate Studies.