

# Graduation Requirements for Graduate Degrees

## Academic Affairs – Graduate Studies

### CWU Policy 505-06

**Effective:** June 17, 2020

**Policy Review Date:** YEAR

**Policy Executive:** Provost and Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs

**Responsible Office/Unit:** Dean of Graduate Studies and Research

#### **Policy Statement:**

#### **Applicability:**

---

#### **Content:**

Policy

---

#### **(1) Program Credits Required**

- A. A graduate student must complete at least 45 quarter credits at the 400-level or above level. Some academic programs require additional credits at this level. At least 25 of the total required credits for the degree must be numbered 501 or above.
- B. Some academic departments restrict the number of credits below the 500 level and the number of layered courses. The university's regulations for layered courses is described in CWU 501-02. Graduate students must take layered courses at the 500 level or higher.
- C. At least 30 credits must be on a graded scale (not S or U). Credit/no credit courses will not be counted toward a master's degree or graduate certificate at CWU.
- D. Credit must be separate and distinct from credit applied toward any other degree, with the exception of approved dual degree programs. No more than 15 quarter credits completed at CWU before the quarter of formal admission will be accepted on the official course of study for the master's degree, although the academic department and the SGSR reserve the right to limit the use of such credit or the acceptance of such credit.

#### **(2) Credits from Extension, Workshops, and Correspondence Activity**

- A. No more than a combined maximum of 8 credits of workshop courses (591) may be applied toward a graduate degree. Courses numbered 491 are not applicable to graduate degree credit. Credits earned in correspondence courses are not applicable to any graduate degree.

### **(3) Professional Development Graduate Credit**

- A. Professional development courses (CWU 500 courses) and continuing education courses cannot be counted toward a graduate degree.

### **(4) Course of Study for Graduate Degrees**

- A. The official course of study reflects the courses and credit needed to meet requirements for the graduate degree. Unless revisions are approved by the department chair or graduate coordinator and the dean of the SGSR, the student must complete satisfactorily or be currently enrolled for all credit specified before advancement to candidacy or before the degree award will be processed.
- B. A course of study must be filed before a graduate student has completed 25 quarter credits leading to the graduate degree; however, it may be required prior to that for financial aid purposes, by a degree program or for a certificate program. The approved form must be on file before submitting a Graduate Committee and Culminating Experience Option Approval Form.

### **(5) Course of Study for Graduate Certificates**

- A. University CWU 501-09 defines graduate certificates as Type D. A student who is enrolled in a graduate certificate program is required to submit a proposed course of study form for a graduate certificate to the SGSR for final review and approval. This form lists the courses proposed by the student to fulfill the total credit requirement for a certificate. A student should submit the form to the SGSR shortly after admission to the certificate program (for certificates that can be completed in less than three quarters) or in the quarter when at least half of the total credit requirement for the certificate is expected to be met.
- B. The program of study leading to a graduate certificate must satisfy the following conditions:
  - 1. The following courses cannot be applied to a certificate: 500, 595, 598, 689, and 700.
    - a. Any course applied to a previously earned degree of any type at any institution cannot be applied to meet the credit requirements of a graduate certificate program.
    - b. At least two thirds of the total credit requirement must be earned at Central Washington University.
    - c. Only one 400 level course can be included in the certificate program. The student must earn a B or above in this course in order for it to count towards the student's course of study.
    - d. A student may be co-enrolled in two certificate programs if approved by the Program Coordinator(s) and department Chair(s).
    - e. If approved by the Program Coordinator, department Chair, and Dean of SGSR, all credits earned with a grade of B or above in a CWU graduate certificate program may be used towards a master's degree program.

- f. All requirements for a graduate certificate (including courses completed at another college or university) must be started and completed within three years. If the student continues on to a master's program, students are expected to complete all requirements for the master's degree within six years from the date of first enrollment.
- g. Any divergence by the certificate curriculum from these requirements must be approved by the dean of SGSR.

## **(6) Culminating Experiences**

### A. Culminating Experience Types

1. The student's graduate committee will approve the culminating experience type before work begins and the Graduate Committee and Culminating Experience Option Approval Form is filed with the SGSR. All students pursuing a graduate degree must demonstrate scholarly proficiency by satisfactorily completing one or more of the following culminating experience(s):
  - a. a thesis;
  - b. an applied project;
  - c. a creative or studio project;
  - d. a portfolio review;
  - e. a comprehensive written examination; and/or
  - f. an oral exam.

### B. Thesis

#### 1. Thesis Definition

- a. 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 graduate student is expected to work closely with the thesis committee chair and committee in the conception, design, and execution of the thesis. Normally, an oral defense of thesis will be required.

#### 2. Thesis Regulations

- a. Theses must conform to standards described in the thesis regulations that are available on the SGSR's website. All theses are required to be uploaded into the Graduate Student Hub Canvas Site for an originality report review, revisions and final posting. All theses will be uploaded to ScholarWorks at the CWU library once approved by the SGSR unless an exception is requested by the student and committee chair.

### 3. Thesis Final Examinations

- a. If applicable, the permit for scheduling a thesis final examination, approved by the committee, must be filed in the SGSR at least three weeks in advance of the examination. The final examination must be scheduled during normal working hours, Monday through Friday, when the university is in session (not between quarters). Final examinations are conducted by the candidate's committee and are open to the faculty and the general public. The committee alone shall decide upon the merit of the candidate's performance. Final assessment of the examination will be reported on a satisfactory/unsatisfactory basis. The candidate shall pass the examination if two-thirds of the official graduate faculty committee members so indicate. In the event of an unsatisfactory final examination, a second examination may be scheduled upon the endorsement of the major department chair and with the approval of the dean of SGSR for the subsequent quarter with at least two months intervening.

4. All degree requirements must be completed within the same or next quarter from the exam date. Failure to complete remaining requirements by the end of the next quarter will result in requiring the final examination to be retaken.

#### C. Applied Project, Creative Project, Studio Project and/or Portfolio Review

1. A project or portfolio review is a significant undertaking of a pursuit appropriate to the fine arts, applied arts or to professional fields. It must be original and show independent thinking; appropriate form and organization; and a rationale. A project reflects applied field research or creative effort, often suited to the student's individual and/or professional goals and allows application of technical skills and knowledge with a practical emphasis. Students completing this culminating experience still require a graduate committee and may require a written product and/or a formal oral defense, at the discretion of the academic program.
2. Individual programs may have specific requirements for project/portfolio review guidelines and information. Programs must have their current guidelines on file with the SGSR.

#### D. Comprehensive Exam and/or Oral Exam

1. 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 provide evidence of independent thinking, appropriate organization, critical analysis, and accuracy of documentation. An oral defense of the exam may be required.
2. Students completing this culminating experience still require a graduate committee.
3. Individual programs may have specific requirements. Programs must have their current guidelines on file with the SGSR.

#### E. Graduate Committee and Culminating Experience Option Approval

1. Every student must have a graduate committee. Graduate committees for theses will consist of at least three graduate faculty members as defined within CWU 505-05 Graduate Faculty. All other culminating experiences must have at least two graduate faculty members. Interdisciplinary membership is strongly recommended. In some departments, a student may choose her/his committee in consultation with an advisor; in others, the chair or graduate coordinator assigns graduate committees. The student must submit a Graduate Committee and Culminating Experience Option Approval Form to the School of Graduate Studies and

Research once a graduate committee has been chosen and before the culminating experience has started. If approved, the committee becomes the student's official advisory committee and the graduate committee chair is generally the student's advisor.

### **(7) Final Folder Evaluation/Application for Graduation**

- A. All graduate students must request a Final Folder Evaluation/Application for Graduation no later than the first week of their anticipated final quarter. This review will evaluate candidacy requirements.

### **(8) Advancement to Candidacy**

- A. A student becomes eligible for advancement to candidacy for a graduate degree upon fulfillment of the following requirements:
  1. Completion of the course requirements as set forth in the course of study;
  2. Completion of the culminating experience and, if applicable, the passing of an oral and/or written examination deemed necessary by the major department;
  3. Attainment of a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 (B) or higher for all courses taken since admission to the graduate program and all work included in the course of study;
  4. Completion of additional departmental requirements, e.g., proficiency in a foreign language; and
  5. Fulfillment of the statute of time limitation (six years) requirement.
- B. Advancement to candidacy and, if applicable, final thesis defense, oral examination and/or written examination scheduling will not be permitted except during the final quarter.

### **(9) Final Quarter Enrollment Requirement**

- A. A student admitted to a graduate degree program must be registered for a minimum of two (2) credits at the university during the quarter the degree is conferred. Enrollment for this purpose should be completed during the usual early registration or regular registration periods to ensure degree conferral if requirements are met.
- B. A student who has requested a final folder evaluation/application for graduation for a particular quarter but who does not complete the requirements for degree conferral by the published deadline will not earn their degree. The student will be required to register for another quarter and request an additional final folder evaluation/application for graduation.

### **(10) Scholastic Requirements for Graduation**

- A. In order to graduate, students must have achieved a cumulative grade point average of at least a 3.0. The cumulative grade point average is calculated using all courses taken after admission into a graduate program, whether part of the approved course of study or not. Grades for all courses

included on the course of study must average at least 3.0 (B). Credit will not be accepted for courses on the approved Course of Study Form in which a grade lower than “C” is earned.

**(11) Maximum Time Limit to Degree Completion**

- A. All courses used toward degree completion in the student’s course of study, including courses transferred in from other institutions must have been completed within six years of the date of graduate degree conferral. Exceptions must have the approval of the Program Coordinator and the SGSR dean. If a degree program is not completed during the six-year period from the quarter for which a student was admitted, the student must reapply to the university. If readmitted, only those credits graded B or higher and completed no more than six years from the date of the student’s program completion may be counted toward the degree.

**(12) Second Graduate Degrees**

- A. Students seeking a second graduate degree must be admitted to the second program in accordance with admission regulations (Reference CWU Graduate Admissions policy) and must complete an approved course of study (of at least 45 credits) distinct from the courses offered for the first graduate degree.

**History:**

*Responsibility: Dean Graduate Studies; Authority: Provost/VP for Academic & Student Life; Reviewed/Endorsed by: Provost’s Council 02/18/2020, 02/22/2022; 06/28/2022; ELT; Review/Effective Date: 06/17/2020; UPAC; Review/Effective Date: 06/17/2020; Approved by: A. James Wohlpart, President  
Reformatted and Assigned new Policy Number - Previous Policy CWUP 5-130-060, June 2025*