



*We see futures*

2024-2025 Academic Year

# Graduate Student Handbook

School of Graduate  
Studies and Research  
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Central is a place where you'll find your success, on your terms, with a community of peers and mentors behind you. No matter where you're headed—we'll be with you every step of the way.

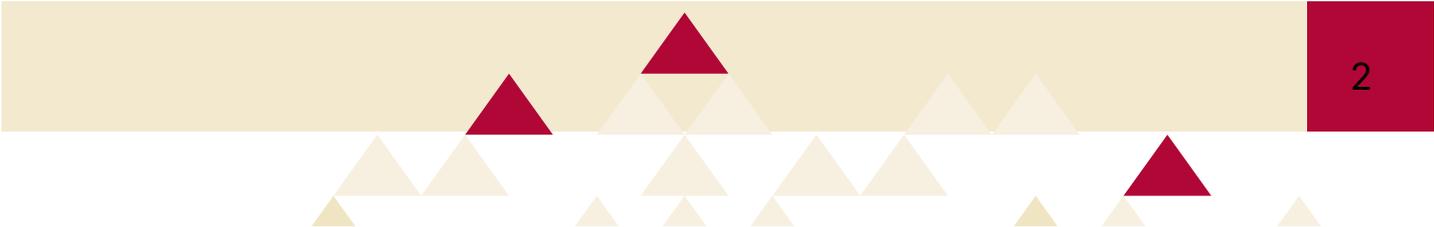
<https://www.cwu.edu/academics/colleges/graduate-studies-research/>

CWU is an AA/EEO/Title IX Institution.



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## Welcome from Dean Rodrigo Renteria-Valencia

Welcome to the School of Graduate Studies and Research (SGSR) at Central Washington University. CWU's history spans more than 120 years, and our graduate programs play an integral role in making Central the university we are today: a model learning community of equity and belonging, committed to academic excellence and societal service.

At SGSR we are committed to creating a student-centered culture of inclusion and innovation. We are dedicated to enriching and advancing your academic journey, helping drive progress and success at each stage of your student career—from helping you engage, navigate, and create a sense of belonging, to supporting your research, creative activities, and professional development, all the way to graduation and networking as alumni.

This handbook is meant as a guide for both new and continuing students. This guide is meant for general overview purposes; please refer to your own department's handbook or policy guide for detailed information pertaining to your academic program.

The SGSR staff and I are always available to assist you as you work through your career and prepare for graduation or completion of your certificate. We look forward to connecting with you. If you have questions at any time, do not hesitate to email [masters@cwu.edu](mailto:masters@cwu.edu) or call us at 509-963-3101.



Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'R. Renteria-Valencia', written over a light gray rectangular background.

Rodrigo F. Rentería-Valencia, Ph.D.

# School of Graduate Studies and Research Mission and Vision

## Mission

The mission of the School of Graduate Studies and Research is to promote a diverse community of scholars among students and faculty, and to encourage the advancement of knowledge through innovation, research, creative expression, and service within its array of programs leading to graduate degrees and certificates.

## Vision

To enhance CWU's teacher-scholar model through faculty teaching, scholarship, and mentoring of students, and to be regarded as the best masters-level institution in the State of Washington. To promote affordable, accessible, career-enhancing graduate education and to prepare students for study at the doctoral and professional level.

## Definition of a Graduate Student



A graduate student is anyone duly admitted to graduate study at Central Washington University (CWU), and who is officially enrolled in a graduate degree or certificate program.

Graduate students cannot be enrolled in more than one degree program simultaneously.

The [Official Electronic Catalog \(OEC\)](#) should be referenced for detailed descriptions of all Master's Degree Policies and Guidelines.



## Student Responsibilities

### A. Class Schedule Confirmation

A student may register online utilizing their MyCWU account. By navigating to MyCWU> Student> Schedule, a student can obtain a listing of his/her classes for current or future quarters. Students should check their schedules carefully for discrepancies.

Students are responsible for ensuring that the courses they select will fulfill degree requirements. Be aware that all graded courses are used to calculate the cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA).

Degree seeking students have access to their Academic Requirements report via their MyCWU Student Center. This shows the courses required for your degree as listed in the Catalog and is updated when the courses have been successfully completed.

### B. Methods of Communication

- **Email:**

It is imperative that students check their CWU e-mail accounts throughout the quarter. The Graduate School, along with Registrar Services, Financial Aid, Student Accounts, and other student services use your student Outlook to e-mail you of important information. If you need help accessing your student Outlook email account, please contact the [CWU Service Desk](#).

- **Mailing Address:**

Keeping your mailing address current in your student account is very important! Addresses can be changed on MyCWU> Student> Personal> Addresses or in person at Registrar Services. Important materials are mailed periodically to all students throughout the quarter. Diplomas will be mailed to the mailing address within your student account.

### C. Deadlines

It is the student's responsibility to be aware of all Central Washington University, Departmental Program and Graduate School deadlines. Academic Calendars with deadlines can be found in the University Catalog. Graduate Student quarter specific deadlines are published on Canvas.

## D. Financial Obligations

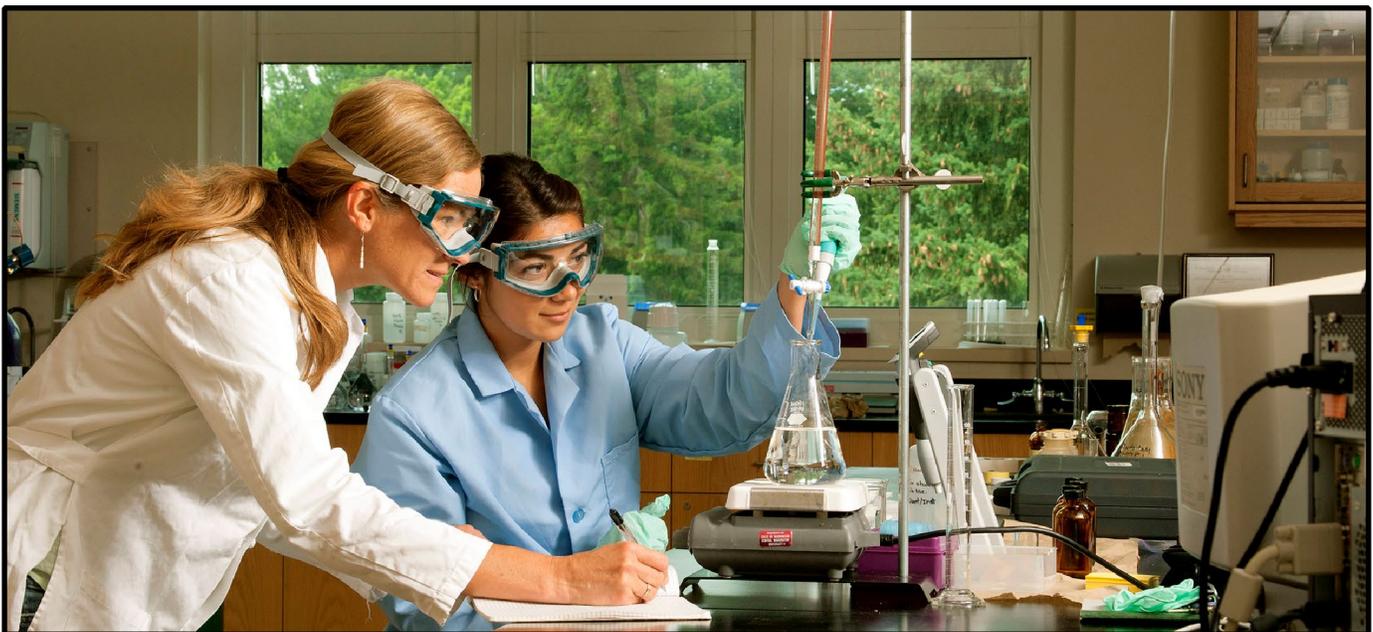
It is the student's responsibility to ensure that their account is kept current. Non-attendance DOES NOT relieve students of their academic and financial obligations.

Admission to, or registration with the university, conferring of degrees, and issuance of academic diplomas may be withheld for failure to meet financial obligations to the university. Students may access their statement within their student MyCWU dashboard.

## E. Student Rights, Responsibilities and Related Policies

As a student at Central Washington University, you have the responsibility to be familiar and comply with all university policies and procedures, specifically those governing student behaviors. For complete information regarding master's degree Policies and Guidelines, please refer to the current Academic Catalog which can be found online.

The [Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) provides a comprehensive array of resources, education, and crisis management services to support student success and development in alignment with Central Washington University's mission and values. The office is responsible for educating students about their rights and responsibilities as members of the CWU community, upholding community standards, and implementing the Student Conduct Code. Visit their website for more information.





## Scholastic Standards

Any graduate student in a master's program whose cumulative grade point average falls below 3.0 at the end of any quarter will be placed on academic probation for the next academic quarter. While on probation, a student may not hold a graduate assistantship. If, after one quarter of probation, the student fails to raise her or his cumulative grade point average to 3.0 or above, the student may be withdrawn from the university. Students may not receive a master's degree or earn a certificate from Central if their cumulative grade point average is below 3.0.

The cumulative grade point average is calculated using all courses taken after admission into a graduate program, whether part of the approved courses as listed in the catalog or not. Grades for all courses included within the course of study must average at least 3.0 (B). Credit will not be accepted for courses on the course of study in which a grade lower than "C" is earned.

## Maximum Time Limit to Degree or Certificate Completion

No credit earned more than six years before the date of the master's degree award may be counted as part of the degree credit requirement except if approved by formal action by the dean of the Graduate School. This includes applicable work transferred from other institutions.

Master's degree students are expected to complete all requirements for the master's degree within six years from the date of first enrollment. Students earning a graduate certificate have three years to complete it. Students seeking to interrupt their studies may do so with the approval of the chair or graduate coordinator of the home department but must pay a non-refundable fee for registration as an on-leave student. Refer to Continuous Registration and On-Leave Status for details.

## Grades

### A. In Progress Grade

In Progress ("IP") grades are used for 700 credits for thesis or project courses that normally extend beyond a single term. The Graduate School will post the actual grades for all 700 "IP's" at the end of your final quarter. Other courses may also issue "IP" grades and it is the student's responsibility to keep track of any outstanding courses with "IP" grades and make sure that a grade is issued. All course work must be graded before the degree or certificate can be earned.



## B. Incomplete Grade

The Incomplete grade ("I") is used when the student was not able to complete the course by the end of the term but has satisfactorily completed a sufficient portion of the coursework and can be expected to finish without having to re-enroll in the course. The instructor will designate what a student must do to complete the course and set a specific date up to one calendar year for the completion of the coursework.

If the work is not completed within one (1) calendar year from the last day of the quarter in which the "I" was received, the registrar will automatically convert the "I" to an "F."

Instructors may require the work to be completed prior to the end of the calendar year. In these cases, the registrar will convert the grade according to the date indicated by the instructor. It is the student's responsibility to contact the professor and make arrangements to complete the course. To earn a grade, a student must complete the work for the course as prescribed by the instructor by the indicated date on the incomplete. Students may not re-register for a course in which they receive a grade of incomplete.

## C. Grade Point

The cumulative grade point average is calculated using all courses taken after admission into a graduate program. Grades for all courses must average at least 3.0 (B). Credit will not be accepted for courses which a grade lower than "C" is earned.



## Continuous Registration and On-Leave Status

All master's degree students, including students in attendance only during summer quarter, must satisfy the continuous registration requirement to maintain active status. Students seeking to interrupt their studies may do so by completing an On Leave Request form and paying a non-refundable fee for registration as an on-leave student. This fee covers four successive academic quarters. For Students whose graduate program runs throughout the academic year an on-leave fee will be assessed every fall quarter. Students whose program meets primarily in the summer months will be assessed the on-leave fee at the beginning of summer quarter. Information and links to the form are available on the Canvas site.

Failure to go on official leave or maintain continuous registration will be taken by the university to signify the student's resignation from the program. Students who resign and later wish to resume study toward a degree must reapply for admission and complete all steps outlined for master's admission. Readmission cannot be guaranteed.

## Graduate Student Forms

Forms pertaining to your graduate career can be found within Canvas. Prior to the start of your first quarter, you will receive an email invitation to obtain access to the *Graduate Students* course within Canvas. If you did not receive the email please contact the School of Graduate Studies and Research so that you can access the Graduate Students course.

### A. Degree Course of Study - Academic Requirement Report

The [Official Electronic Catalog \(OEC\)](#) is the university's compilation for all curricula. For detailed information regarding which courses are required for your degree or certificate, and for information regarding academic policies, procedures and guidelines, please check the catalog. Graduate students may use the catalog from the academic year that they are admitted under or the one for the current year.

Degree candidates must complete at least 45 credits (some programs require more credits) as outlined in the OEC.

**Starting Fall Quarter 2024** the Graduate School will be phasing out the Degree Course of Study Form for degree programs (*certificate programs will be required to submit a course of study*). The **Academic Requirement** report, accessed through the student center within your MyCWU account, will be used to track student progress toward degree completion.

If there will be deviations from the Academic Requirement report, such as course substitutions, elective course changes or transfer credits, these must be endorsed by the faculty advisor and department chair and a Course Substitution/exception/ transfer credit form must be on file and approved at the SGSR. This form can be found on Canvas.

Courses taken prior to formal admission to a CWU master's degree program may be considered for transfer to a CWU master's degree program provided that certain criteria are met. The courses must be listed on the Course Substitution/ Exception/ Transfer credit form, and an official transcript from the institution where the coursework was taken must be on file with the SGSR. Credits accepted in transfer are those that are part of an accredited institution's regular graduate degree programs.

Transfer credit must be graded an A or B, and courses must have been taken within the last six years.

A total of 15 graduate quarter credits may be applied to a CWU master's degree, however, no more than 9 of those quarter credits may be from an institution other than CWU. (A total of 20 quarter credits may be applied to a CWU educational specialist degree.) For graduate certificates, no more than 6 quarter credits can be applied from either CWU or other institutions. (Calculations will be adjusted for semester credit earned: 1 semester hour credit equal to 1.5 quarter credit hours).

## B. Certificate Course of Study

Students enrolled in a Graduate Certificate program are required to submit a proposed course of study form to the SGSR. The certificate course of study form is available within Canvas. This form should list the courses as outlined in the Official Electronic Catalog and should be signed by the graduate coordinator and department chair and filed with the SGSR.

The [Official Electronic Catalog \(OEC\)](#) is the university's compilation for all curricula. For detailed information regarding Academic Policies and guidelines, please check the catalog.





## C. Graduate Committee and Option Approval/Culminating Experience

The Graduate Committee/Option Approval form is to be completed as soon as the student has formed a committee and selected an option of culminating experience based on what is applicable for their degree program. Students earning a certificate are NOT required to complete this form.

Most master's degree candidates must have a graduate committee of at least three members. 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. In either case, the graduate student is expected to work with the department chair or graduate coordinator in forming her/his committee.

The student must submit a Graduate Committee and Option Approval Form to the Graduate School. If approved, the committee becomes the student's official advisory committee. The thesis or non-thesis option advisor is the student's graduate committee chair and generally is a faculty member in the department of specialization.

Once this form has been approved by the SGSR you will be granted access to the Graduate School Thesis or Graduate School Non-Thesis & Certificate Course within Canvas where you will find detailed information regarding the processes required to finish your program.

### *a. Research with Human Subjects – Institutional Review Board Approval*

All CWU-affiliated research, including student research projects which involve human subjects, must be reviewed by the Central Washington University institutional review board for the protection of human subjects.

Students apply for HSRC review by filling out an application form, which can be obtained on their [website](#). No research can be initiated prior to formal approval. It is highly recommended to review the information provided on the HSRC website well before starting a project.

### *b. Research with Animal Subjects - Animal Care and Use Approval*

Graduate students whose research involves vertebrate animal subjects may not commence research without first obtaining clearance from the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC). Students must apply for IACUC review by filling out an application form, which can be obtained online at the IACUC [website](#). It is highly recommended to review the information provided on the IACUC website well before starting a project.



## Graduation / Advancement to Candidacy / Earning a Certificate

### 1. Final Folder Check:

All graduate students earning a degree, or a certificate request a Final Folder Check (this is also referred to as “degree checkout”) by the end of the first week of classes for the specific quarter that you are finishing. The Final Folder Check request form is in the Graduate Students course within Canvas. You should be requesting this step ONLY if you have communicated with your thesis/project/exam/capstone committee ahead of time.

Please be sure to keep track of deadlines which are posted on Canvas as well as in the Catalog.

In order to process your folder check request a Graduate Committee and Option Approval form must be on file with the SGSR if earning a degree, and a Graduate Certificate Course of Study on file if earning a Certificate. If there are deviations from the Academic Requirement Report within your MyCWU account, there must be an approved Substitution/Exception/Transfer form on file with the SGSR. Graduate Student forms are located on Canvas.

You must be registered for a minimum of 2 credits.

Once your Final Folder Check is completed you will receive an email to your CWU email address that will include the results of your folder check and forms that you will be required to complete and return to the Graduate School.

All graduate students will complete a Final Evaluation / Degree or Certificate Application, this form will be sent to you once your Final Folder check is completed.

Spring and Summer degree earning candidates must request a Final Folder check\* by the end of the change of schedule date for Spring Quarter (check the current academic calendar for dates) for your name to appear in the Virtual Commencement book. Certificate earners do not appear in the Commencement book.

\*Note: This is not the same as signing up to walk/participate in Commencement Ceremony. To register for commencement, please see the Commencement website.



## 2. Permit for Final Examination

Depending on your program completion requirements, a “Permit for Final Examination” form may be emailed to you with your Final Folder Check documents.

The final examination must be scheduled between the hours of 7 a.m. and 6 p.m., 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. 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 Graduate School for the subsequent quarter with at least two months intervening.

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

Permits should be completed and returned to the Graduate School at least 2 weeks prior to exam date.

## 3. Project, Portfolio Review, Exam, and Capstone Option

Written exams are arranged by the exam or capstone committee.

Projects and Portfolio reviews are submitted directly to program department and/or project committee.

## 4. Thesis Option

For all students completing a thesis, failure to review and follow the style guidelines in the SGSR Thesis Regulations will result in the Graduate School being unable to accept your thesis and could delay the awarding of your degree.

The SGSR checks all manuscripts for correct and consistent usage of the chosen style. Students should use the most current edition available of the style that has been selected by their department or program. Students should contact their committee chair for advice on the appropriate style manual.



Thesis Regulations can be found on Canvas in the Graduate School Thesis course. These are submitted through Canvas. You will be given access to the Thesis Course when you submit your Option Approval form or request your Final Folder check.

Forms to be submitted when your thesis is finished:

- Electronic Thesis Submission Agreement This is found in Canvas. It will need to be completed with required faculty - departmental signatures required and returned to SGSR
- A signed copy of the signature page (Page ii of thesis) submitted to SGSR

Refer to the Electronic Thesis Submission process in the Thesis Regulations in Canvas for the step-by-step process.

## 5. Pay Degree/Certificate and Thesis Processing Fees

All graduate students earning a degree or certificate are required to pay a \$50 degree fee. Thesis students have a \$25 Thesis processing fee in addition to the degree fee.

Fees will be posted to your MyCWU account once the Final Folder check is complete.

Payment can be made via your MyCWU account. Accounts must be paid in full in order to receive your diploma.

## 6. Graduate or Earn Certificate

All requirements must be met by the last day of the quarter to earn your degree or certificate.

All Courses for 700 credits will be changed from IP (In Progress) to Satisfactory when your degree is posted.

Degrees and certificates will be posted within 4 - 5 weeks of the end of the quarter if all requirements have been met.

For Diplomas: Watch for an email to your CWU email account from Parchment, where you will have free, permanent access to a high-resolution digital copy of your diploma. Your **PRIMARY** NAME is printed on the diploma and will be sent to your MAILING address that is listed in your MYCWU account approximately 4-6 weeks after the end of the quarter.

Diplomas will not be issued while there is any outstanding student account balance.

## Commencement Ceremony

Commencement is the capstone celebration of your hard work and commitment, as well as a celebration of the lasting memories you have forged at Central Washington University. Students are highly encouraged to participate in the Commencement ceremony, which takes place in Ellensburg the Saturday after finals in June.

This ceremony is intended to celebrate the successful completion of all Master's and Education Specialist (EdS) degrees. Those earning certificates are not eligible to attend.

Students who graduated within the current academic year as well as the previous summer quarter are eligible to participate. (For example, for Spring 2025 commencement; **graduating students from Summer 2024 through Summer 2025 are eligible to participate**).

Please pay close attention to all commencement registration deadlines which will include ordering regalia.

## CWU Commencement Information

This ceremony requires faculty and students to be dressed in full regalia. Master's degree recipients wear hoods as part of their regalia, you can find the hood color you should order from Central Washington University's [Wildcat Shop](#) within the Graduate School Canvas Courses.

During the ceremony all graduates will be presented with a diploma cover. The actual diploma will be mailed after the ceremonies. A professional photographer will take individual graduation photos.

Registered students are encouraged to invite friends and family members to the ceremony; however, seating will be offered on a first come, first served basis. Tickets are not required for entry.

Specific information will be posted on the commencement website as well as within the Canvas Courses.





**Last updated date January 2025**

