

Academic Affairs Manual

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Subject: Grading Theses, Projects, and
Comprehensive Examinations

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Graduate Theses, Projects, and Comprehensive Examinations Policy

(Supercedes PM 91-05)

Section 40510 of Title 5 of the Administrative Code requires satisfactory completion of a thesis, project, or comprehensive examination for the master's degree and defines the characteristics of each of these culminating experiences as follows:

(b) Requirements for the Degree

(3) Satisfactory completion of a thesis, project, or comprehensive examination, defined as follows:

(A) A thesis is the written product of a systematic study of a significant problem. It identifies the problem, states the major assumptions, explains the significance of the undertaking, sets forth the sources for and methods of gathering information, analyzes the data, and offers a conclusion or recommendation. The finished product evidences originality, critical and independent thinking, appropriate organization and format, and thorough documentation. Normally, an oral defense of the thesis is required.

(B) A project is a significant undertaking appropriate to the fine and applied arts or to professional fields. It evidences originality and independent thinking, appropriate form and organization, and a rationale. It is 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.

(C) 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 evidences [*sic*] independent thinking, appropriate organization, critical analysis and accuracy of documentation. A record of the examination questions and responses shall be maintained in accordance with the records retention policy of The California State University.

The Board of Trustees has endorsed the recent report of the Advisory Committee to Study Graduate Education in the California State University and asked the chancellor to encourage the campus presidents and faculty to pursue actively the goals of the recommendations of the report, subject to available resources. One of the primary recommendations of the report was as follows:

The choice of the culminating experience should be that which is educationally most appropriate to the student, and to the discipline. Where a project or examination serves as the culminating experience, it should be equivalent in rigor to the thesis. An oral defense should be part of the culminating experience.

In this spirit, after having reviewed the draft reports of the Advisory Committee, the CSU Dominguez Hills Graduate

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Council formed a committee to review the policy on theses and projects. The result was the publication of an improved and enhanced Thesis and Project Guide which also affirmed the long-standing campus policy that projects would conform to the same standards as theses.

This policy affirms and endorses the policies and procedures outlined in the CSU Dominguez Hills 1990 Thesis and Project Guide as those to which all graduate programs at the University will adhere. In addition, the office of the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research is charged with the responsibility to document the satisfactory completion of all culminating experiences for graduation and to maintain records of theses, projects and culminations in accordance with the records retention policy of the CSU.