MASTER'S DEGREES

Master's Degrees
Master of Fine Arts Degree

CSU offers a variety of master’s degrees. The features and requirements of these degrees are summarized in the Programs A-Z section of the Catalog.

Master's Degrees

An important distinction is made between Plan A and Plan B, Plan C, and the Professional Science Master’s. The former, Plan A option, requires the preparation of a thesis. The thesis is typically a written formal document which addresses, in an original fashion, some important concern of the discipline. A thesis involves significant independent work. A certain number of credits are allowed for the preparation of the thesis. The Plan B degree does not require a thesis; instead, either a scholarly paper, exam, portfolio, or similar project is required.

Plan C master’s degree options are distinguished in two ways. First generally, only course work is required. No thesis, project, or final examination is required; however, some specific programs may require an internship, practicum, or other experience consistent with expressed goals of the program, as approved by the University Curriculum Committee. Second, Plan C options are designed for professional degrees; thus, this option is not available in the M.A. or M.S. Further, within any given department, Plan C degrees may not bear the same title as those with Plan A or Plan B options. Please note, however, that not every professional degree need offer the Plan C option.

The Professional Science Master’s (PSM) degree option (30 credit minimum) is designed to meet the following curriculum requirements: 1) a majority of credits must be earned in advanced science, technology, engineering, math and/or computational sciences courses over the two year program; 2) there must be a professional skills component: and 3) a capstone activity based on an experiential component, that includes a field placement course (e.g. internship, practicum, affiliation, field work) must be a part of the curriculum. No thesis, project, or final examination is required. The PSM is to provide managers for organizations that provide technology-based outcomes in public, private, government, or non-profit sectors. PSMs must conform to the nationally accepted academic criteria for the PSM curriculum as determined by the Commission on Affiliation of PSM Programs (https://www.professionalsciencemasters.org) (formerly named PSM National Office) (psmoffice@sciencemasters.com).

An active advisory board composed of individuals from industry, business, government, non-profit organizations, and CSU faculty is required; advisory board members serve to provide advice on the program curriculum, assist with student projects and placement, and interact individually with students. To be recognized as a PSM degree, programs must first be approved by the Commission on Affiliation of PSM Programs, and subsequently approved and routed through the paths required by the CSU Faculty Council, Curricular Policies and Procedures Handbook. PSM specializations are listed in the Graduate and Professional Bulletin.

Credit Requirements (Master's Degrees)
The minimum number of required credits for all master’s degrees is 30. However, individual departments may have credit requirements in excess of the minimum university requirement. For example, terminal professional degrees may have a minimum credit requirement that exceeds 60. The number of 500-level or above credits earned for master’s degrees varies: a minimum of 50% for Plans A and B, and 21 or a minimum of 50% whichever is more for Plan C’s and Professional Science Master’s degrees. Additionally, at least 12 of the 500-level or more credits must be in regular courses for all master’s degrees. Other courses may be at the 300- or 400-level or may be in courses not defined as regular. A minimum of 24 credits must be earned at CSU, 21 of which must be earned after admission to the Graduate School. Plan C master’s and Professional Science Master’s programs may not include independent study, research, or supervised college teaching credits toward the degree unless one or more of these are required by the program, as approved by the University Curriculum Committee. Additionally, Plan C master’s may not include internship or practicum credits toward the degree unless one or both are required by the program, as approved by the University Curriculum Committee. Credits earned in pursuit of one master’s degree may not be used for a second except in those cases where an M.A. degree is applied to the M.F.A. (see section on Master of Fine Arts Degree).

Final Examination (Master's Degrees)
Master’s Plan A and Plan B students are required to complete and pass a final examination/defense. At the discretion of the committee, the final examination may be oral or written, or both. At least one week before the final examination the advisor must inform the student and the committee member of the nature and scope of the examination.

Master of Fine Arts Degree
This is a terminal degree for practicing professionals in the visual or literary arts. In general, it requires at least three years of full time study beyond the baccalaureate or at least one year of full time study beyond the Master of Arts degree.

This degree requires the preparation of a major artistic work. This work, whether in the form of a product of the visual arts, a performance, or a written manuscript, must

1. demonstrate a level of creativity sufficient to establish the student as a member of the appropriate artistic community, and
2. stand in its own right as a significant aesthetic or literary contribution. This work is presented as an M.F.A. thesis.

Credit Requirements (Master of Fine Arts Degree)
Total credit requirements vary from 48 to 60 according to the department in which the degree is earned. Further, individual departments may have requirements in excess of CSU minimums laid out in the Catalog. The number of 500-level or above credits earned for the Master of Fine Arts must be a minimum of 50%; of that number, 12 must be in regular courses. Other courses may be at the 300- or 400-level or may be in courses not defined as regular. In general, a minimum of 32 credits must be earned at CSU, 21 of which must be earned after formal admission to the Graduate School.

However, if a previously completed Master of Arts degree is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements, up to 30 credits may be accepted toward the program. If this option is used, no additional transfer credits may be accepted. In this case, a minimum of 18 credits must be earned after formal admission to the M.F.A. program.
Final Examination (Master of Fine Arts Degree)

A final examination is required for the Plan A degree. The final examination may be oral or written or both. At least one week before the final examination, the adviser must inform the student and the committee members of the nature and scope of the examination.