

# MASTER'S DEGREES

## Master's Degrees

### Master of Fine Arts Degree

### Dual and Joint Master's Degrees

CSU offers a variety of master's degrees. The features and requirements of these degrees are summarized in the Programs A-Z section (<https://catalog.colostate.edu/general-catalog/programsaz/>) 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](mailto: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 300-400 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) or when the student is enrolled in an approved dual or joint master's degree program (see section on Dual and Joint Master's Degrees).

## 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 300-400 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.

## Dual and Joint Master's Degrees

Dual and joint degree programs partner two intra-university master's degree programs within or between departments, programs, or SAUs in the same or differing colleges. A dual degree program results in the simultaneous conferral of two separate degrees. A joint degree program results in the conferral of a single degree with both programs listed on the diploma. For either the dual or joint degree program, a defined number of credits is shared between the two program areas, so that the total number of credits is less than that for two individual degrees.

Dual and joint degree programs must be reviewed and approved through the University's curriculum review and approval processes. Additionally, graduate program partners of a dual or joint master's degree program must submit, and have approved by the Graduate School, a onetime Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that details the administrative oversight, financial agreements (including distribution of differential tuition and special fees), advisory and graduate committee requirements, other agreements, and curriculum of the dual or joint program. Contact the Dean of the Graduate School for details of the review and approval processes for new dual or joint degree program, and for details of the MOU format.

Students in a dual or joint master's degree program must meet all admissions requirements and all the curricular requirements for the dual or joint program. See the Dual and Joint Master's Degree Programs section of Admissions Requirements and Procedures for details on applying to a dual or joint master's degree program. All other Graduate School and Graduate and Professional Bulletin policies are to be met, including time limits.

A graduate committee is required unless both degree program areas of a dual or joint master's program are Plan C master's programs. The graduate committee must include faculty members from both academic areas, as well as an outside committee member not associated with either degree program area. See the Advisory System section of Requirements for All Graduate Degree, Graduate Study for more details.

See the Collaborative Degree Program section of Inter-University Graduate Programs for information on collaborative degree programs that partner a CSU graduate program with a graduate program at an international university.

## Credit Requirements (Dual and Joint Master's Degrees)

Graduate programs that are accredited through a professional organization must align their curriculum with curricular standards of the accrediting body when participating in a dual or joint master's degree program.

No more than 50% of credits from the degree with lower credit requirements may be double-counted for both degrees. For example, if one master's degree requires 30 credits and the other degree requires 42 credits, no more than 15 credits can be double-counted toward both degrees. In addition to regular courses, double-counted credits may include practicum, internship, research, and thesis credits. Double-counting of credits will be granted only for credits earned at Colorado State University and completed with a grade of "B" or higher or a grade of "S" if applicable.

If a dual-degree student is dismissed from the Graduate School due to academic standing or failure to make academic progress, the student may be readmitted, in accordance with Graduate School policy, to only one of the programs (see the Readmission section of Admissions Requirements and Procedures). The student will no longer be eligible to participate in the dual or joint master's degree program.

## Final Examination (Dual and Joint Master's Degrees)

A joint master's degree may have a single thesis, exam, project, or portfolio component that integrates content from both degree program areas, as appropriate to the degree type (plan A, B, or C).

If one or both of the academic areas of a dual degree has a thesis, exam, project, or portfolio component, a final thesis defense, examination, or project/portfolio presentation must be held covering the combined thesis, exam, or project/portfolio component. One thesis, exam, project, or portfolio is submitted to satisfy the requirements of both degrees of a dual degree program.

If a thesis, exam, project, or portfolio-based degree is combined with a coursework only degree in a dual degree program, the thesis, exam, project, or portfolio should integrate content from both degree program areas.

If a final examination is required for either a dual or joint degree program, the final examination may be oral or written, or both as determined by the examination committee. At least one week before the final examination, the advisor must inform the student and the committee members of the nature and scope of the examination.