General Requirements – Bachelor's Degree

CHOICE OF CATALOG/CATALOG RIGHTS

Cal Poly issues a new catalog every one or two years, and the requirements for degree programs may change from one catalog to the next. Students have the right to choose the catalog they will use, as described in Section 40401 of Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations.

An undergraduate student remaining in attendance in regular sessions at any California State University campus, at any California community college, or any combination of California community colleges and campuses of the California State University, may for purposes of meeting graduation requirements, elect to meet the catalog requirements in effect at the campus from which the student will graduate either:

1. at the time the student began such attendance, or
2. at the time of entrance to the campus granting the degree, or
3. at the time of graduation, or
4. as allowed by campus policy: Cal Poly also allows students to elect the requirements of any catalog in effect during their regular attendance.

Campus authorities may authorize or require substitutions for discontinued courses. A campus may require a student changing his or her major or any minor field of study to complete the major or minor requirements in effect at the time of the change.

For purposes of this section, “attendance” means attendance in at least one semester or two quarters each university year. Absence due to an approved educational leave or for attendance at another accredited institution of higher learning shall not be considered an interruption in attendance, if the absence does not exceed two years.

Choice of Catalog Older than 10 years for Returning Students

Returning students may request to complete their degrees on a catalog older than 10 years only if all remaining degree requirements at the time they left Cal Poly do not exceed 16 units. The decision to approve or disapprove a student’s request is based on: (1) her/his willingness to commit to completing outstanding degree requirements within a specified timeframe, and (2) her/his ability to demonstrate, with written documentation, reasonable currency of knowledge and skills in her/his degree field to the satisfaction of the faculty in the applicable major, as certified by the department chair. Both the college dean and the Vice Provost for Academic Programs must give approval. Currency in the degree field may be demonstrated by additional coursework and/or by relevant work experience, to be determined by the department chair.

The expiration of a catalog is determined by adding 10 years to the last term in which that catalog was in effect (e.g., the 2009-11 catalog will be “older than 10 years” after Spring Quarter 2021).

Students are not allowed to complete a degree that is no longer offered by the University.

Note: In addition to remaining degree requirements on the student’s catalog, s/he may also be required to complete the GWR. Check with the Evaluations Unit in the Office of the Registrar.

GENERAL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

There are eight general requirements, which all students must meet in order to earn the bachelor’s degree from Cal Poly and participate in commencement. Students must be formally admitted to the major in which they wish to graduate, and must matriculate, in order to earn a degree. The more students understand their progress toward meeting these requirements and relate them to the many programs available, the better the chance of creating an exciting educational experience and avoiding errors which may delay graduation.

The specific requirements for each degree program are shown under the academic department offering the major and include a curriculum display with courses listed by Major, Support, General Education, and Electives. The department may have a flow chart, which shows the recommended sequence of courses leading to the degree.

Students are responsible for meeting all requirements. Advice is available from faculty advisors, college advising centers, the Office of the Registrar, and students’ online Degree Progress Reports. Students should plan their degree programs carefully and review them frequently with their advisors.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATION

1. Minimum Number of Units

   Baccalaureate degree programs ........... minimum 180 units

   Individual baccalaureate degree programs may require more than 180 units. (Title 5, Sections 40500, 40501, 40505, 40507) A minimum of 60 units overall must be upper division (defined as any course completed by the student at the 300- or 400-level).

   Degree | Minimum # of major units at 300-400 level
   --- | ---
   Bachelor of Arts (BA) | 18
   Bachelor of Science (BS) | 27
   Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) | 27
   Bachelor of Architecture (BArch) | 41
   Bachelor of Landscape Architecture (BLA) | 41
2. **Grade Point Average (GPA)**
   Students must earn at least a 2.0 GPA in: 1) all Higher Education units attempted (all college-level work), 2) Cal Poly cumulative units attempted, and 3) the major (the courses listed as major courses in the curriculum display). For a definition of GPA and quality points and hours, please refer to Grading.

3. **U. S. Cultural Pluralism (USCP) Requirement**
   Students must complete the USCP requirement as indicated on page 44.

4. **General Education (GE) Courses**
   Students must complete the GE requirements as indicated in the degree program and shown in the GE section of this catalog (see page 39).

5. **Graduation Writing Requirement (GWR)**
   Students must demonstrate competency in writing skills as described below.

6. **Senior Project**
   A senior project is a required for all Cal Poly students as described below.

7. **Academic Residence Requirements**
   The minimum requirements for units taken in residence at Cal Poly are:
   * 50 quarter units
   * 36 of the 50 units in residence must be upper division
   * 18 of the 36 upper division units in residence must be in the major
   * 12 units of General Education
   * 30 units in residence of the last 40 units counted toward the degree
   
   Extension credit or credit by examination may not be used to fulfill the residence requirements. However, a maximum of 36 quarter units of extension credit may be counted toward the bachelor's degree.

8. **Evaluation for Graduation**
   Students should request a graduation evaluation from the Office of the Registrar four quarters prior to their anticipated graduation date. The evaluation confirms remaining requirements for graduation and is a formal statement on the expected quarter of graduation. The actual date of graduation is the end of the quarter in which all requirements have been met; this date may differ from the student’s last quarter of enrollment (an example is a student who completes the Graduation Requirement (GWR) after the last term of enrollment).

   Students are encouraged to submit any and all paperwork (subscriptions, transcripts for requirements completed elsewhere, etc.) in a timely fashion in order to expedite conferral of degrees.

   Graduating students receive a complimentary diploma. Additional diplomas may be ordered through El Corral Bookstore. The diploma is not ordered until all degree requirements have been completed. The diploma is mailed to the student’s mailing address approximately five to six weeks after the degree has been awarded. It is the student’s responsibility to update her/his mailing address on her/his my.calpoly.edu portal.

   If a student breaks enrollment prior to completion of degree requirements, she or he may be required to re-enroll and may be held to catalog requirements in effect at that time.

**COMMENCEMENT**

For a student to participate in graduation ceremonies, the student must satisfy *at least one* of the following:

* shall have completed all degree requirements and not have participated in a graduation ceremony previously;
* shall currently be enrolled in classes that would complete all of that student's degree requirements;
* shall be registered for classes for the following term that would allow the student to complete all of her/his degree requirements.

Students completing all degree requirements in the Winter, Spring or Summer term are automatically eligible to participate in the Spring Commencement. Students completing all degree requirements in the Fall term are eligible for Fall commencement.

**GRADUATION WRITING REQUIREMENT (GWR)**

All students must demonstrate competency in writing skills as a requirement for graduation. Information on currently available ways to meet this graduation requirement may be obtained from the Writing Skills Office, Agriculture Building (10) Room 130 (805-756-2067), or on the Writing Skills webpage, www.writingskills.calpoly.edu.

The Board of Trustees of the California State University has mandated that all students earning undergraduate or graduate degrees in the CSU must be certified as proficient in writing at the upper-division level.

Students must earn proficiency after reaching 90 units, and are strongly encouraged to attempt the GWR before their final quarter of enrollment. Students should review their program requirements to determine which option is appropriate. The GWR, if taken at another CSU campus (within seven years), may be approved if the student is pursuing a Cal Poly degree.

At Cal Poly, students may meet the Graduation Writing Requirement (GWR) through one of the following options:

1. Pass the Writing Proficiency Exam.
2. Pass an approved upper-division course with a grade of C or better (**C- or below does not qualify**) AND receive certification of proficiency in writing based on a
500-word in-class essay. The course may be taken on a credit/no credit basis, but the student must earn a minimum grade of C in order to satisfy the GWR component of the class.

The following courses are approved for GWR credit:
*Non-GE writing courses: ENGL 301, 302, 310, 317, or 326;

SENIOR PROJECT
Definition: The senior project is a capstone experience required for all Cal Poly students receiving a baccalaureate degree. It integrates theory and application from across the student's undergraduate educational experiences. The senior project consists of one or more of the following:
(1) a design or construction experience,
(2) an experiment,
(3) a self-guided study or research project,
(4) a presentation,
(5) a report based on internship, co-op, or service learning experience,
(6) a public portfolio display or performance.

Where the senior project does not consist primarily of a written document, departments, may, where they deem appropriate, require some written documentation (length to be determined by the department) to accompany the senior project. The precise nature or form of a senior project is to be determined by the department or program of the student's major. The senior project is normally related to the student's field of study, future employment, and/or scholastics goals, and is carried out under direct faculty supervision.

Expected Outcomes
At the discretion of the major department, students are expected to have the ability to:
• Reduce a topic to specific points of analysis.
• Organize the points of analysis into a logical sequence.
• Apply acquired competencies to the successful completion of a project.
• Obtain, evaluate, synthesize, and apply project-related information.
• Develop and follow a project plan.
• Estimate hours of labor and/or cost of materials necessary to complete a project.
• Organize, illustrate, and write clear and concise project documentation.
• Accept supervision when needed.

Requirements
1. The total number of senior project units must be 1 to 6 quarter units.
2. The senior project requirement is the same for all students in a given curriculum, but not for all students in the university, because of the nature of the various curricula.
3. Normally 30 hours of student work is required for each unit of credit granted.
4. Projects requiring an excessive amount of time are discouraged.
5. The number of students participating in a group senior project should not be so large as to unduly limit individual experience or responsibility and initiative.
6. The student is responsible for identifying costs and potential funding sources for his or her senior project prior to initiation of the project. Costly projects are discouraged.
7. It is the student's responsibility to become informed about the university's intellectual properties policy and human subject policy (where applicable).

Library Copy
1. The academic department may send one copy of each senior project to the University Library where it is reproduced on microfiche or in an electronic format. A microfiche or electronic copy of the project becomes part of the Library's archival collection where it is available for public use.
2. After being copied on microfiche or electronically, the original project is returned to the academic department of its origin, as applicable. Non-print media (slides, audio/video tapes, CD's, floppy disks, etc.), however, comprising all or part of a project is permanently retained in the Library collection.
3. All projects submitted to the Library include a completed Senior Project Requirement Form and a title page. The Form must be signed by the student's advisor or academic department head before it can be accepted for processing by the Library. The title page should follow a standardized format.
4. Each student whose senior project is submitted to the library is required to pay a library-processing fee for making her/his senior project available.

OTHER INFORMATION
Academic Minors
A minor is an integrated, coherent group of courses (24 to 30 quarter units), which gives the student knowledge in an area that lies outside of the major field of study. Please see page 11 for the list of minors.
• At least half of the units must be from upper-division courses (300- or 400-level)
• At least half of the units must be taken at Cal Poly
• Not more than one-third of the courses in a minor can be graded Credit/No Credit (CR/NC), except for courses that have mandatory CR/NC grading
• A minimum 2.0 GPA is required in all units counted for completion of the minor (foreign language minors must have a 2.75 GPA)

The minor must be completed prior to, or at the same time as, the requirements for the bachelor's degree. A major and a minor may not be taken in the same degree program, and a minor is not required for a degree.

Students who wish to complete a minor are to contact the department offering the academic minor as early as possible in the program and fill out the appropriate agreement form. Students may select a minor which has requirements from a catalog that is different from that of their major. The minor form can then be submitted to the Office of the Registrar. The completion of the minor is noted on the student's transcript, but is not shown on the diploma. In no case is a diploma awarded for the minor.

Academic Honors
The Dean's Honors List is compiled at the end of each quarter to honor undergraduate students who have completed 12 or more letter-graded units during the quarter with a 3.5 grade point average or better for that term. Units with a grade of CR do not count toward the 12-unit minimum. The President's Honors List is compiled at the end of each university year to honor those undergraduate students who have demonstrated consistent achievement, as represented by being named to the Dean's Honors List for any three of the four quarters of the university year. The university year begins with summer quarter.

Candidates for bachelor's degrees with the following Cal Poly grade point averages are awarded honors at graduation. Only courses taken at Cal Poly calculate into the Cal Poly grade point averages. The GPA is officially calculated at the time the student has completed graduation requirements:

- Summa cum laude – 3.85
- Magna cum laude – 3.70
- Cum laude – 3.50

These honors are noted on both the diploma and the transcript.

Blended BS+MS Programs
Blended programs provide an accelerated route to a graduate professional degree, with simultaneous award of both bachelor's and master's degrees. See individual programs and/or page 60 for additional information.

Change of Major
This policy goes into effect beginning with students admitted for Fall 2010. Students admitted before Fall 2010 may use either this policy or the previous change of major policy in their respective catalog.

Applies to matriculated undergraduate students at Cal Poly wishing to change major. The “target” major is the major into which a student wishes to transfer.

Policy Statement
Cal Poly students are required to declare a major at the time of application. Some students find that their interests and abilities lead them in a different direction. The University must offer a transparent and timely process for all students who seek to change majors.

Process
I. General Guidelines
A. Minimum Time at Cal Poly
   Students must complete at least one quarter at Cal Poly before requesting a change of major.
B. Basic Criteria that may be used in advising for determining Target Major Options
   All academic departments should give careful consideration when determining target major options. The following criteria may be considered:
   1. The majors for which the student was eligible at time of admission,
   2. College academic record (e.g., GPA, coursework, etc.), and
   3. Remaining coursework and the student’s ability to complete degree requirements in the new major within the published unit maximums for that major.
C. One Chance to be Accepted
   Students who enter into an individualized change of major agreement (ICMA) and do not complete the ICMA requirements will not be eligible to request that major again later in their career at Cal Poly.
D. Completion of Change of Major
   The change of major will be approved once the student has successfully met all of the requirements of the ICMA.
E. Timeframe
   The ICMA must be feasible to complete and be completed in no more than two quarters.
F. Publication of Change of Major Criteria
   As applicable, departments’ web sites should post the minimum criteria required of all students to change major into their program including timelines.
G. Impaction Constraints
   Per the Office of the Chancellor’s The California State University Enrollment Management Policy and Practices, other admissions requirements for all transfer students (internal and external) entering the target majors on impacted campuses must be the same (e.g., portfolios, auditions, etc.).
H. Academic Standing
   A change of major agreement will be void if a student is academically disqualified prior to the completion of the agreement.
II. Requesting a Change of Major
A. Meet with current advisor to review major options and talk about career paths. Consider, also, consulting with Career Services, other advisors, and faculty and/or department heads/chairs in both current and target majors.
B. Meet with the department head/chair or designee in the target major to determine the likelihood of success in the new major.
C. Review the curriculum requirements for the target major.
D. If the target major is not a good fit for the student, the student will be advised to look at other options.
E. If the student receives a positive assessment based on consideration of I.B., and it is clear that he/she can complete degree requirements in the new major within the unit maximum (unit maximum is 24 units above program requirements), then an ICMA will be developed (see below).

III. Individualized Change of Major Agreement (ICMA)
The change of major will be approved once the student has successfully met all of the requirements of the ICMA. The ICMA will cover no more than two quarters. The ICMA may include the following components:
A. Maximum of three specified courses or 12 units in the target major.
B. Additional courses and/or units to allow the student to meet minimum progress standards and complete degree applicable units in both majors, whenever possible (e.g., GE courses or electives a student could use to meet degree requirements in both current and target majors).
C. GPA requirements, as determined by the department (e.g., overall/term GPA, GPA in major-specified courses, GPA in past two quarters).
D. If applicable, specific steps to be met to resume good academic standing status.

General Information
As much as possible, entering students are encouraged to make careful and informed decisions about the initial application to their declared majors. All majors at Cal Poly are impacted and it will be difficult to change into some majors despite a student’s best efforts. Nevertheless, sometimes students will find that their interests, abilities, or talents will take them in a different direction than they had identified when they originally applied to Cal Poly and they may seek to change to a different major. Depending on the degree of impactation of the target major (i.e., the relationship between the number of applicants to the major and the number of places available), there might only be a few spaces available for change of majors, or no spaces at all. Students who are unable to change into their desired majors might also need to consider applying to another university in the major of their choice.

If a student makes the decision to change major, doing so early in the academic career will better allow a student to make degree progress in a timely manner and stay within the University’s minimum progress to degree standards; major changes late in the academic career will be restricted by the University’s minimum progress standards, including the unit maximum.

All students, whether lower division (those with fewer than 90 Cal Poly units) or upper division (those with more than 90 Cal Poly units or 90 transfer units), intending to change majors must demonstrate that they can complete the new major within the minimum progress standards and the unit maximum set forth by the University. This is likely to be a greater challenge for upper division students, who will have fewer remaining degree requirements. Further, students need to be aware that not all departments can accommodate upper division change of majors.

Course Substitution
Although a curriculum is specified for each major, under certain conditions a student may be permitted some deviation from the established curriculum. See the major department for substitutions involving major or support courses.

All Cal Poly students are expected to complete the GE courses specified in their degree program. Cal Poly GE courses must be selected from the GE requirement list. Substitutions are not permitted except in extraordinary circumstances. Students requesting exceptions must follow petition procedures, outlined on the GE web site. This process may take several weeks.

Double Majors or Degrees
If a student has completed the requirements for two or more majors leading to the same baccalaureate degree (e.g., two BS degrees), those majors are acknowledged on a single diploma. The major which the student requests as her/his primary major will appear first on the diploma. If a student has completed the requirements for two or more majors leading to different baccalaureate degrees (e.g., a BS and a BA), those degrees and the completed major or majors leading to each degree are acknowledged on two separate diplomas. If a student has completed concurrently the requirements for two or more degrees, at least one of which is a graduate degree, Cal Poly issues a separate diploma for each degree earned.

A student who adds a second major to her/his degree objective is expected to fulfill all requirements for both majors. However, a student may be allowed to use one senior project to fulfill the requirements for two majors. The program in which the student seeks to replace the senior project must grant permission before the student begins the project. Permission must be obtained using a major/support substitution.
Graduate Courses Taken by Undergraduates for Graduate Credit

Cal Poly undergraduates who have achieved senior standing may take courses in the 400 or 500 series for possible graduate credit while still undergraduates. If they subsequently enter a Cal Poly master’s or credential program, they may petition to have such course credit applied toward their master’s degree or credential program, if the units were not used for the baccalaureate degree. A Graduate Petition for Special Consideration is the means of petitioning for this allowance.

Student Classification/Standing

Undergraduate students are assigned a classification level according to the number of quarter units earned:

Lower Division
- Freshman ................... fewer than 45 units
- Sophomore ................. 45 to 89 units

Upper Division
- Junior ......................... 90 to 134 units
- Senior ......................... 135 or more units

For the purposes of this calculation, earned units include transfer and Advanced Placement credit, in addition to Cal Poly units.