

Earning a MA Degree in Chemistry

General Comments

The closest thing to a legally binding document related to your degree is the University Catalog (<https://catalog.sdsu.edu/index.php>). Additional details can be found in this document as well as on the Graduate Division web page. The following is a sequential summary of the requirements for earning a Master of Science degree. The MS degree requires two or more years of research under the supervision of a faculty advisor. Choose your research advisor by the area(s) of your interests. This is perhaps one of the most important professional decisions that you will make. Quoting the 2023-2024 University Catalog: Students are held individually responsible for the information contained in this catalog. The requirements listed in the Graduation Requirements section of the catalog are those requirements which the university will make every effort to preserve for students subject to this catalog. All other parts of the catalog, including this University Policies section, are subject to change from year to year as university rules, policies, and curricula change. Failure to keep informed of such changes will not exempt students from whatever penalties they may incur.

Although the College of Graduate Studies attempts to preserve requirements for students subject to this catalog, information contained herein is subject to change from year to year as university rules, policies, and curricula change. Failure to keep informed of such changes will not exempt students from whatever penalties they may incur. All students beginning graduate study at San Diego State University after August 2023 will be required to follow the procedures and regulations stated in the 2023-24 edition of the Catalog.

Questions concerning graduate study at San Diego State University should be referred to the Graduate Division. The Graduate Division office is located in Student Services East 1410. Although the Chemistry Department Graduate Advisor and the Graduate Division will do their best to keep you informed of procedures, etc., ultimately, you are responsible for your schedule and academic progress. Be sure to read the Basic Requirements for Master's Degree. Rules may change, but in general you should follow the latest edition of the Graduate Division's documents. Many of the forms that you might need are available on-line at: <https://grad.sdsu.edu/current-students/forms>. You will find below which forms you should submit and which the graduate advisor will do.

1. **File Preliminary Program of Study.** Make an appointment with the Graduate Advisor to create a Preliminary Program of Study. This should be done early in your first semester. This will detail which required courses you should take and will also establish your tentative graduation date.

2. **Attain Classified Graduate Standing.** Everyone begins his or her graduate education with a Conditionally Classified Student status. You must satisfy the following requirements in order to change your status to Classified Graduate Standing. This must be completed within the first year of your graduate study. Otherwise a petition will need to be submitted to give you a semester extension. This basic requirement can be complete by two routes:

A. **Orientation/Qualifier Exams or Courses.** You must pass 4 of the 5 divisional Orientation/Qualifier Exams. Two of these exams must be organic and physical chemistry. These exams cover material covered in typical undergraduate courses. Two of the exams must be passed at the 50th percentile, one at the 45th level and one at the 40th percentile level or higher. These exams are given two weeks before the fall semester and one week before the spring semester. You have three opportunities to pass these exams before beginning your third semester of study, otherwise you **must** take one of the approved courses listed below, earning a B or higher grade to satisfy this requirement. These courses can also be taken during your first year of study. The approved courses are listed by the 5 divisional areas:

Analytical 550, 750, 751, 752 and 753

Organic 432, 538, 730, 731, 732, 734 and 736

Biochemistry 560, 562, 563, 564, 761, 763 and 765 Physical 510, 711, 712, 713 and 714
Inorganic 520A and 520B

B. **Other requirements.** You may be required to meet other requirements as a stipulation of your admission into this program. It is important that you be aware of these requirements and complete them prior to the deadline date. See the Graduate Secretary in the Department of Chemistry office for any specific requirements of your admission into our graduate program.

The Graduate Advisor will automatically change your status to Classified Graduate Standing shortly after you have met the above requirements.

3. Chem 790 Literature Seminar. This seminar class is one of the few required classes for the MA degree. It should be taken in your third semester or the following semester. Do NOT take this class in your first year of study since you are unlikely to have sufficient background unless you have already earned a master's degree.

4. **Official Program of Study (POS).** After you have passed the qualifier exam requirements and attained Classified Graduate Standing, you can submit an **Official Program of Study and Advancement to Candidacy for an Advanced Degree**. Generally, the Official Program of Study is submitted in November or December in your third semester. This document lists all courses that you have taken or plan to take to meet your MS degree. Your preliminary program of study is a good starting point for the Official Program of Study. You will be sent a request to complete the POS worksheet and return to the Graduate Advisor for submission.

Exchange Classes at UCSD. You can take classes at UCSD provided they complement those courses offered here. However, they must be part of your program of study for the MS degree. You must be in good academic standing. A 4-unit class at UCSD converts to a 2-unit class at SDSU. The corresponding fees for those four unit classes are equivalent to a 3-unit class at SDSU. You need to begin the paperwork to take classes at UCSD at least a month before the start of the quarter at UCSD. See Graduate Advisor to file paperwork. If you wish to take courses at UCSD before you file your program of study, see the graduate advisor in the summer to file an early POS.

Any deviation from the specific master's degree requirements listed in the Graduate Bulletin must be requested on a **Petition for Adjustment of Academic Requirements**. Discuss any changes with the Graduate Advisor prior to submission of your **Official Program of Study and Advancement to Candidacy for an Advanced Degree**.

The basic requirements are:

The student must complete a graduate program of 30 units which includes a major consisting of at least 24 units in chemistry from courses listed in the graduate catalog as acceptable on the master's degree programs. At least 15 of these units must be in 600- and 700-numbered courses. Chemistry 790 is required. At least 21 units of graded graduate courses (500 level or above) must be taken in at least three of the five disciplines within chemistry. These units must be numbered below 790. A maximum of three units of Chemistry 797 or 798 may be used provided a written report is approved by course instructor. This degree is offered under the non-thesis, Plan B option, as described in Part Two of the Bulletin of the Graduate Division. A written comprehensive examination is required. Up to 6 units of classes outside the Department of Chemistry can be included in the program of study. These courses must be at the 500 or higher level. In addition, a maximum of 9 units can be transferred from other universities or SDSU Global Campus, providing they meet the basic requirements for the master's degree. Three and four unit quarter credit hours courses are transferred as two semester credit hours. All classes taken outside the Department of Chemistry require prior approval by the Graduate Advisor before submission of your program of study.

Your grade point average must be at least 3.0 (B) in the following:

- The courses listed in the **Official Program of Study**.
- Courses required to complete undergraduate deficiencies.
- All courses taken at the 300-level and above concurrently to the earliest course listed in the **Official Program of Study**, including courses accepted for transfer credit.

Transfer or extension courses may not be used to improve the grade point average of units completed at San Diego State University. None of your program courses can have a grade less than 2.0 (C). Your overall GPA must be at least a 3.00 in order to submit your POS.

The set of requirements specified in the Graduate Bulletin at the time your **Official Program of Study** is approved will be in effect for your degree.

Any change for an elective class option to your **Official Program of Study** after it has been approved must be made on a **Request for a Change in Official Program** form. If the change affects a specific degree requirement, i.e., Chem 790, as opposed to an elective option, (any of the other courses) must be made using a **Petition for Adjustment of Academic Requirements**.

At a minimum, your **Official Program of Study** must be approved at least one semester before your anticipated graduation date. Approval of your program of study may require 2-4 weeks.

5. **Advancement to Candidacy.** Generally, you will be advanced to candidacy at the same time that your **Official Program of Study** is approved. Any deficiencies that prevent advancement to candidacy at this point will result in the review of your status at the end of each semester by the Graduate Division. Your GPA must be 3.0 or higher to be advanced to candidacy.

6. **File Application for Graduation.** You must apply for graduation, since this is not automatic. It is recommended that you submit your application for graduation at the beginning of the semester that you plan to graduate. The deadline for this is listed in the Academic Calendar of the University Catalog or on the Dissertation & Thesis Review web site. This deadline is generally the third week of the semester. This form is available at the Graduate Division office or through their website, http://grad.sdsu.edu/current_grad_students/graduation_info. The completed application must be filed with the appropriate fee at the Cashier's Office. Late applications are not accepted! Students who do not complete all degree requirements during the semester they apply for graduation are required to reapply and pay the application fee again. You will receive an Evaluation for Graduation from the Graduate Division as a result of the Application for Graduation form. This mid-semester evaluation lists the deadlines and requirements not yet completed. It is imperative that you take immediate action to complete these in order to graduate that semester. However, you may "walk" in the Spring Commencement, even though you do not plan to graduate until summer or have completed your degree the previous fall semester. You will need to apply for graduation by the second week of the semester. Also, attend the GradFest to get all of the graduation necessities; caps/gowns, tickets, announcements and etc., in preparation of attend

7. **Write Final Report.** Master of Arts students will receive their degree under Plan B. This requires a written comprehensive paper on a current topic in chemistry. You will need to identify a faculty member who has agreed be your reviewer and give this information to the Graduate Advisor. The topic of this paper must also be approved by the Graduate Advisor. You must be advanced to candidacy before submission of this paper to the Graduate Advisor. The following guidelines should be used for this paper:

- The paper must be at least 20 pages in length (double spacing is suitable).

- The bibliography must contain at least ten references, five of which must be journal articles published within the last five years. **Copies of the five most important journal articles used in the report must be submitted with the report.** The bibliography must follow the style of the Journal of the American Chemical Society (see the Bibliography discussion given in Appendix A of the Chemistry Graduate Students' Handbook). The references will be noted by numbers throughout the text.
- The paper must initially be submitted to the Graduate Advisor at least four weeks before the deadline (the last day of the semester) so that it can be read and any necessary corrections be made. It is likely that one of the faculty familiar with the subject of this paper will read and approve this paper.

The Graduate Advisor will file a **Final Examination** form with the Graduate Division after approval by the faculty reviewer.

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