



Master of Science Packaging

Graduate Student Handbook

2026

Department of Nutrition, Food Science & Packaging
San Jose State University

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www.sjsu.edu/nufspkg

Department Office Location:
Central Classroom Bldg., Room 200

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Chapter 1. Welcome and Purpose of this Handbook1

Welcome to the Department of Nutrition, Food Science & Packaging at San Jose State University (SJSU). We wish you success at every stage of your academic journey. The purpose of this student handbook for the Master of Science (MS) program in Packaging is to provide you with departmental-level instructions on the program. This handbook should be used in conjunction with the university instructions from the College of Graduate Studies (CGS) <https://www.sjsu.edu/cgs/>. Please note that department policies are always subordinate to university policies.

Mission

The Master of Science in Packaging program is designed to meet the needs of the student who has a baccalaureate degree and seeks advanced preparation in packaging and packaging related fields. Meanwhile, a wide variety of types of companies employ graduates with advanced degrees. The Master of Science in Packaging program will help to educate packaging professionals and create innovative solutions that enhance or maintain product quality, increase packing efficiency and reduce waste.

Students will gain experience in applying mathematics, science, and technology to packaging-related problems, assessing the suitability of packaging materials and designs for specific applications, and in critically evaluating new knowledge presented in the scientific literature.

Graduates with advanced graduate degrees are less likely to go into production positions and more likely to go into education, research, or management positions than those with bachelor's degrees.

Who to go to for help

Applicants

- Start by reviewing the Admissions chapter in this handbook.
- Review the department website.
<https://www.sjsu.edu/nufspkg/programs/ms-packaging.php>
- Review the university website. <https://www.sjsu.edu/admissions/graduate/index.php>
- International students can find resources on the College of Graduate Studies website.
<https://www.sjsu.edu/cgs/current-students/resources-international-students/index.php>
- **DO NOT send any application documents to the department graduate coordinator**. All documents are upload using the Cal State Apply website.
<https://www.calstate.edu/apply>.

Application process questions should be directed to the College of Graduate Studies.

Phone: 408-924-2427

Email: graduate-studies@sjsu.edu

- If you still have questions about the program, please contact Professor Edmund Tang, Packaging Director at edmund.tang@sjsu.edu. If you have logistic/coordination questions, please feel free to email the graduate coordinator, Professor Adrienne Widaman, at Adrienne.widaman@sjsu.edu. *Please note that all direct communication with the department will become part of your application file and will be evaluated by the department's admission committee. Graduate students are expected to be professional, have excellent written and verbal communication, and to be able to find answers to their questions independently.*

Enrolled Students

- One-on-one meeting with the Packaging Director
 - Admitted students who have completed their intent to enroll documents will meet with the graduate coordinator.
 - During this meeting questions can be asked and the student will receive a personalized course roadmap.
- Review this graduate handbook department-specific program instructions and the College of Graduate Studies website for university-specific instructions.
- Review the Graduate Student Canvas course. Once enrolled, access will be granted. Please contact the graduate coordinator if you do not have access during your first semester.
- Students will be enrolled in NUFS 201 during their first semester. One objective of the course is to provide awareness of the responsibilities of a graduate student and help students understand the MS program and process
- The graduate coordinator offers weekly, drop in office hours during the fall and spring semesters. Details are under 'Announcements' on the Canvas page.
- The graduate coordinator's email is Adrienne.widaman@sjsu.edu.

Chapter 2. Admission Process

Admission to the MS Packaging program is competitive and limited. The admission committee ranks applicants based on overall GPA, statement of purpose, work/research experience, and letters of recommendation. General university requirements for consideration of admission, as well as important dates are outlined at <https://www.sjsu.edu/gape> and <https://www.sjsu.edu/graduateadmissions/>.

Deadlines

The MS Packaging program only admits 1 time per year (Fall Semester). Typically, applications open by October 1st and close by February 1st. Visit the CGS [website](#) for exact dates. Deadlines for international and domestic applications may vary.

Application Procedure

- All applicants must apply on-line using the Cal State Apply, linked [here](#). All application material is submitted through this application program. DO NOT send application material to graduate coordinator. All university application instructions can be found on the [CGS](#) and [California State University website](#).
- Follow all calstateapply instructions to meet all of the University application requirements
- In addition, the department asks for specific documents for this program. You use the same calstateapply application process to submit these documents. Program Application Material instructions are as follows:
 1. Once in the application, click on the 'Program Material' section to upload the following:



2. **Statement of Purpose** –The statement of purpose is expected to be a letter of intent expressing your interest in the program and educational goals as a potential graduate student. The letter should be single-spaced, using 1-inch margins and 12-point font, and contain no more than 750 words. The admission committee is interested in your educational and professional background, your interest in our program, and your research and/or management experience. We are also curious about your career goals and how our program aligns with these goals.

3. Resume/CV – Your resume/CV should be current and cover employment, volunteer, and research experience.
4. Three Letters of Recommendation – Request 3 letters of recommendation. Ideally, two letters should be from faculty of an academic institution and one letter should be from an employer or volunteer supervisor. Ask the writer to use official organizational stationery or letterhead. Use the Cal State Apply program to officially request the letters by selecting ‘Add Recommendation’ and entering in the recommender’s contact information. The recommender will be automatically notified, and they will send the letter directly to the university. **Make sure to follow up with your reviewers and remind them of deadlines.**

Graduate Record Examination (GRE) and Other Test Requirements

- **The GRE is no longer required.**
- Applicants may also be required to take a language proficiency exam; instructions can be found on the CGS [website](#).

Transcripts

- Refer to the [calstateapply](#) instructions. **Do NOT mail to the department or send to the graduate coordinator.**

Deadline Extension – There are no application deadline extensions.

Cost – At this time, the Cal State Application Fee of \$70 is required. The department can not provide any kind of fee waiver. **Do not email the graduate coordinator for a fee waiver.** Application fee waiver requests are handled by the [CSU](#).

Process and Timeline

Once your application, transcripts, test scores, and letters of recommendation are received, a CGS evaluator will review your application for minimum university entrance criteria. If the criteria are met, the applicant is referred to the department (NUFS&Pkg). Final decision on admission is made by the department’s graduate selection committee and is based on an application evaluation rubric. Applicants are ranked by overall GPA, letter of intent, letters of recommendation, and research/professional experience. The top-ranked applicants are accepted. Please note that all of your documents must be received by the CGS deadline for your application to be considered by the graduate selection committee.

View your application status at <https://my.sjsu.edu> using the login and password provided to you after your application was submitted. All communication is through my sjsu at this point in the process.

Admission decisions will be made by May 1st, and you will be notified through [my sisu](#).

Acceptance

If you are a top-ranked applicant, you will be admitted as either a classified or conditionally classified standing. Full details can be found on university [admission requirements](#).

Changing Classification Status

Once you have satisfied the course requirements, during your second to last semester, you will complete the petition for candidacy form. Once approved, your classification will be changed.

You've Been Accepted: Now What?

The University Admission Office will send you an acceptance letter, and you will be able to accept using the [my.sjsu](#) portal. You will also need to sign the intent to enroll and pay the required fees. The department graduate coordinator will welcome you via email and provide you with further instructions. Meet all acceptance and registration deadlines.

Scholarships/Research Award Opportunities

Many internal and industry awards and scholarships are available. Check with the Packaging Director.

Chapter 3. Coursework

Prior to registering for the first time (or upon re-entering), a student should consult with the Graduate Coordinator to develop a schedule of courses. All 200-level courses start at or after 3pm.

Master's Requirements (30 units)

- [NUFS 201 - Colloquium in Nutrition, Food Science and Packaging](#) 3 unit(s)
- [NUFS 217 - Issues in Nutrition, Food and Packaging](#) 3 unit(s) (GWAR)
- [NUFS 257 - Biostatistics in Research](#) 3 unit(s)
- [NUFS 295A - Research Methodology](#) 3 unit(s)
- Electives determined by Packaging Director (12-15 units)
- [NUFS 298/299](#) Culminating Experience (3-6 units)

Culminating Experience = Complete Plan A (Thesis) or Plan B (Project or Comprehensive Exam)

Graduate Credit Courses*

Some upper division undergraduate courses may count towards the 30 unit requirement.

1. Under the guidance of the Packaging Director select course(s).
2. Enroll and complete the course with a C or better while maintaining an overall GPA of 3.0 or better.

3. Add the course to the advancement to candidacy petition.

Chapter 4. Requirements for Advancement to Candidacy for the MS - Packaging

The semester before you graduate, students should petition to [Advance to candidacy](#) for the Master's degree in Packaging. Advancement requires favorable action of the Graduate Committee of the Department of Nutrition, Food Science and Packaging and of the university's Office of Graduate Admissions & Program Evaluations. In general, students will be recommended for candidacy when they:

1. Fulfill all university requirements for advancement to candidacy.
2. Attain classified graduate standing
3. Complete a minimum of 9 units of letter-graded approved courses.
4. Receive a minimum 3.0 grade point average in all classes listed on the candidacy form.
5. Successfully complete [NUFS 217](#) with at least a "C" to meet the [Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement \(GWAR\)](#).
6. Match with graduate advisor and thesis/ project topic OR be assigned the comprehensive exam .

The student is responsible for filling out and submitting the petition, one semester before graduation to the graduate coordinator. University deadlines based of your planned graduation dates can be found [here](#). All the instructions can be found in the modules on the Canvas Graduate Student page. Please note, you must have completed and been assigned a grade for NUFS 217 before you submit your petition. Therefore in some cases, students will not submit the petition for candidacy until their last semester. Plan A or Plan B -Thesis, Project or Comprehensive Exam

Chapter 5. Culminating Experience

University Graduation Requirements

Students must complete all residency, curriculum, unit, GPA, and culminating experience requirements as outlined in the [Graduation Requirements](#) section of the [Graduate Policies and Procedures](#). The graduate program requires the completion of a culminating experience. The plans include Plan A (thesis), plan B (project) or plan B (comprehensive exam).

Culminating Experience Description

Students must complete one of the following plans:

Plan A (Thesis)

For this plan, the student is required to complete 6 units of NUFS 299 - Master's Thesis. The student is required to complete a research project under advisement of a Nutrition, Food Science and Packaging faculty. The research must result in the generation of a thesis that meets the University Master's Thesis and Doctoral Dissertation Guidelines. The student must pass an oral examination defending the research to a departmental faculty committee.

Requirements

- Meet the College of Graduate Studies thesis requirements and deadlines.
- Complete the written thesis- signed off by a committee of 3 faculty members.
- Pass an oral defense of research - pass/fail decision made by 3 committee members
- Present their work in either a poster or oral format at the Department MS Student Presentations.
- Upload all required assignments on Canvas Graduate Student Page

Plan B (Project)

For this plan, the student is required to complete 3 units of NUFS 298 - Special Studies in Nutrition, Food Science and Packaging and submit a written project in publication format. The student must pass an oral examination] defending the research to a departmental faculty committee. The student must prepare an oral presentation or poster presentation for the public, community partner, or industry.

Requirements

- Complete the written project- signed off by a committee of 2 faculty members.
- Pass an oral defense of research - pass/fail decision made by 2 committee members
- Present their work in either a poster or oral format at the Department MS Student Presentations.
- Upload all required assignments on Canvas Graduate Student Page

Plan B (Comprehensive Exam)

For this plan, the student is required to complete 3 units of NUFS 298 - Special Studies in Nutrition, Food Science and Packaging. All graduate students opting for the courses-only option must pass the Comprehensive Exam (given once a semester) to earn the MS in Packaging degree. The Comprehensive Exam is the student's opportunity to demonstrate mastery and integration of the knowledge and skills of the MS in Packaging curriculum.

Requirements

- Students must be enrolled in NuFS 298 (3 units) course in the semester that you want to take the comprehensive exam. Packaging students will take the exam during their last semester.
- Pass a written exact replicates a research project with 70% or higher. Pass/fail determined by 2 faculty members.
- Pass an oral exam defending the student's ability to apply the core course knowledge to research study with a 70% or higher. Pass/fail determined by 2 faculty members. Original poster will be presented during the exam.
- Students will only be given two attempts to pass the exam.
- If a student fails any portion of the exam twice, they will be ineligible to receive the MS degree and disqualified from the program. The comprehensive exam is an oral and written exam administered on campus.

Culminating Experience Selection Process

How is the culminating experience plan decided? **By the end of NUFS 201**, some students will have been selected by a faculty research advisor to complete a plan B research project under the faculty's guidance. For students who have not been matched with faculty, they will complete plan B - Comprehensive Exam. For a few students, the faculty advisor may decide that the project and the quality of the student researcher meets the thesis-level requirements. In these cases, the student will be allowed to complete the plan A - thesis.

Chapter 6. Additional University Policies and Procedures

University policies can be found at: <https://www.sjsu.edu/gape/> and also, in the course catalog: <https://catalog.sjsu.edu/content.php?catoid=2&navoid=98>. A summary is provided below.

Please check the GAPE website for the most updated information.

Leave of Absences

As a student, you can take a leave of absence for 1 or multiple semesters of enrollment. When you return, you will still be classified as an active student and will not have to re-apply. However, in order to take a leave of absence, you must follow very strict rules. Graduate Studies allows 2 types of leaves: the one-semester leave and the official leave.

One-Semester Leave

Once a graduate student has enrolled and completed the 1st semester in which they were accepted, they are considered active graduate students. A graduate student then has the option of missing 1 semester without having to file any leave form. The student must enroll and complete the subsequent semester after their one-semester leave or they will be discontinued and will have to re-apply to the program. There is no limit to the number of times a student can take this one-semester leave. Summer session does

not count as a full semester and can be automatically skipped without having it count as a leave of absence. Graduate students will still receive a registration notice for the semester they are supposed to return and do not have to file any special return forms.

Official Leave of Absence

Graduate students may qualify for a leave of absence if they wish to miss more than 1 semester without penalty. To apply for an official leave of absence, please complete the official form (found on the Office of Admissions and Records website). A student may only take a leave for 4 semesters before returning. Once a student knows when they will return, they should notify Admissions and Records as early as possible so registration will not be jeopardized in the returning semester.

Returning After a Non-leave of Absence

When a graduate student wants to return after missing more than 1 semester and is not on an official leave of absence (as described above), the student is no longer considered a graduate student and will have to re-apply to the University. A graduate student must follow the same application rules and deadlines as other prospective students. Once a student is re-admitted, their previous academic history will continue to be used for their graduate career as long as it is not older than 7 years.

Continuous Enrollment

If you have completed all the required coursework and only have to complete your Project or Thesis and/or internship, you must enroll in a special class called NUFS 1290R. Failure to enroll may jeopardize completion of your degree.

Time Limit for Completion of Degree

Section 40510(b)(2), California Code of Regulations, Title 5, Education, requires that courses for completed master's degree programs be no older than 7 years at the time of the awarding of the degree. This means that no more than 7 years may elapse between the time you complete the 1st course in your program and the date you actually complete (not register for) the last course in the program and complete the requirements for the degree. If, after reading the catalog information on the 7-year time limit, you still have questions regarding the time to complete your degree, email/call the evaluator listed for your program.

APPENDIX

Appendix 1 Resources

<https://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/>

<https://www.sjsu.edu/nufspkg/programs/ms-packaging.php>

<https://www.sjsu.edu/gape/>

<https://www.sjsu.edu/nufspkg/programs/dietetic-internship.php>

Appendix 2. Core courses required for the MS degree

Course #	Title	Notes	Units
NuFS 201	Colloquium in Nutrition, Food Science & Packaging	Only offered in Fall	3
NuFS 217	Issues in Nutrition, Food Science & Packaging	Meets the Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR). Only offered in Fall	3
NuFS 257	Biostatistics in Research	Only offered in Spring	3
NuFS 295A	Research Methodology	Only offered in Spring	3
Total			15

Appendix 3 -List of Faculty Research Advisors

Jacqueline Bergman, Ph.D, Assistant Professor. University of California, Davis

Office: CCB 202, email: jacqueline.bergman@sjsu.edu

<https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Jacqueline-Bergman-3>

Izzie Brown, MS, RDN, CSCS, NUFSPkg Lecturer.

Office: CCB 202, Phone: (408) 924-3373, izzie.brown@sjsu.edu

Research interests: sports nutrition, eating disorders, body image and energy availability.

Clinical areas of expertise: cardiovascular, diabetes and psychiatric.

Susan Chen, PhD, Assistant Professor, Virginia Tech, VA

Office: CCB 108, Phone (408) 924-3106, susan.chen@sjsu.edu

Research Interests: Sustainable food systems, food environment, community food insecurity,

food waste. <https://scholar.google.com/citations?hl=en&user=CeAWjHsAAAAJ>

Xi (Alex) Feng, PhD, Associate Professor. Iowa State University, IA

Office: CCB 109, Phone: (408) 924-3146, xi.feng@sjsu.edu

Research interests: Food chemistry, with emphasis on functional food, food flavors, food processing technologies and preservation. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Xi_Feng7

John Gieng, PhD, Associate Professor. Pennsylvania State University, PA

Office: HB 130, Phone (408) 924-1277, john.gieng@sjsu.edu

Research interests: 1) To evaluate the composition and nutritional quality of sustainable foods and their impact on health. 2) To evaluate the impact of nutrition on health and related behaviors and programs using biotechnology. 3) To evaluate the relationships among nutrition, metabolism, body composition, and health. <https://www.sjsu.edu/people/john.gieng/>

Jamie Kubota, MS, RD, Lecturer and CHEW advisor. San Jose State University, CA

Office: CCB 109, Phone: (408) 924-6530, Jamie.kubota@sjsu.edu

Research interests: Quantifying cooking skills/knowledge level, integration of cooking programs into nutrition education, use of targeted cultural menus in managing malnutrition.

Kasuen Mauldin, PhD, RD, Professor; Dietetic Internship Director. UC Berkeley, CA

Office: CCB 105, Phone: (408) 924-3109, kasuen.mauldin@sjsu.edu

Research interests: Clinical nutrition, medical nutrition therapy, nutrition assessment tools (body anthropometry, body composition, indirect calorimetry, dietary intake, trackers / wearable devices), weight-inclusive patient care and non-dieting approaches to health, telenutrition / telehealth. <https://sites.google.com/sjsu.edu/mauldin-rsca>

Giselle A.P. Pignotti. PhD, RD, Associate Professor; DPD Director. Arizona State University, AZ

Office: CCB 107, Phone: (408) 924-3108, giselle.pignotti@sjsu.edu

Research interests: Determinants of healthy eating and strategies to improve dietary quality and practices with emphasis on dietary assessment, food access, nutrition and health literacy, intuitive eating, bone health, cardiovascular disease, and health disparities. <https://scholar.google.com/citations?hl=en&user=OUzFKTgAAAAJ>

Edmund Tang. MS, Assistant Professor & Director of Packaging, San Jose State University, CA

Office: IS 207, edmund@westpak.com

Research interests: Edmund also works full time at Westpak, Inc., an industry leading product and packaging testing facility. He regularly presents research at the ISTA meetings on Distribution and Transportation stress analysis.

Ashwini R. Wagle, EdD, RD, Professor; Department Chairperson. University of New England, ME

Office: CCB 201, Phone: (408) 924-3110, ashwini.wagle@sjsu.edu

Research interests: Foodservice management, food habits and practices of South Asian Indians. <https://scholar.google.com/citations?hl=en&user=wHg94oEAAAJ>

Adrienne Widaman, PhD, RD, Associate Professor; Graduate Coordinator. University of CA Davis, CA

Office: HB 129, email: adrienne.widaman@sjsu.edu

Research interests: Head and neck cancer, dysphagia/swallowing disorders, dietitians effectiveness in oncology care, dietary assessment methods and hospital foodservice management. <https://www.semanticscholar.org/author/Adrienne-M-Widaman/7678458>

Mi Zhou, PhD, Assistant Professor. Virginia Tech, VA

Office: HB 132, email: mi.zhou01@sjsu.edu

<https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Mi-Zhou-13>

IMPORTANT: Please note that faculty members are not available during Summer/Winter breaks, except for designated advising dates indicated on registration materials.