

Master's Degree Requirements

Academic departments in seven colleges at Mississippi State University offer Master of Arts (M.A.), Master of Science (M.S.), and a number of specialized master's degrees. Refer to Graduate Degrees and Majors Offered (<http://catalog.msstate.edu/archives/2014-15/graduate/degrees-majors-offered>) for a complete list. Consult Admissions Information (<http://catalog.msstate.edu/archives/2014-15/graduate/admissions-information>) and the specific master's program description for complete and detailed information regarding both admissions and degree completion requirements.

Master's Graduate Committee

Committee Composition

In most cases, the student's graduate program is directed by a Graduate Committee composed of a major professor and at least two committee members, one of whom may be a minor professor. The committee is chaired by the major professor who must hold Level 1 or 2 Graduate Faculty status and must be from the student's major department/program. At least one-half of the remaining committee members must be from the student's major/disciplinary field and must hold Level 1, Level 2, Associate, or Committee Participant status. No more than one Committee Participant appointee can serve. Any member of the committee can serve as the thesis director. The Committee Request (http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/pdf_forms/committee_request.pdf) form is submitted to the Office of the Graduate School.

Students in non-thesis programs with no variation in program of study and/or with standardized examinations are not required to have committees (per Graduate Council, May 2004).

Committee Changes

When the committee composition changes, the student submits a Change of Committee (http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/pdf_forms/request_for_change_of_committee_members.pdf) form to the Graduate School reporting the changes. The form requires the signatures of the new and departing committee member(s), the student, and the graduate coordinator. If, subsequent to the administration of the final or oral/written comprehensive examination, a student's request to remove a member of the graduate committee is not met with the approval (signature) of that member, the student must submit to the dean of the Graduate School a written request containing suitable justification for removal of the committee member. The dean will then decide if removal is necessary and accordingly inform the student, the committee member, the major professor, and the graduate coordinator.

Master's Program of Study

Course Requirements

A minimum of 30 semester hours of graduate study is required in all master's degree programs although some programs require more credits. During the first semester of enrollment, the student must complete with his/her graduate committee a Program of Study (http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/pdf_forms/graduate_program_of_study.pdf) form consisting of all courses and research credits required for degree completion according to the Graduate School policy and the program requirements in the *Catalog of the Graduate School* for the academic year the student was admitted. The student and the committee must also jointly identify research skill requirements and/or other requirements for degree completion. The form is submitted to the Graduate School.

- Thesis-option students must include at least 24 hours of graduate coursework and 6 hours of research/thesis. A minimum of 12 coursework credit hours, exclusive of thesis/research credits, must be 8000 level or higher (per Graduate Council, January 2014).
- A student may be required to take an ESL, LSK, or undergraduate course. These courses or an audited course cannot be included on a graduate program of study.
- Programs of study for non-thesis students consist of a minimum of 30 hours of coursework, with at least 15 hours at 8000 level or higher (per Graduate Council, April 2004).
- A maximum of 6 Directed Individual Study (DIS) credit hours can be included on a program of study. Numbered at the 7000 level, they may be used to meet the 8000-level course requirement.
- Courses taken in previous graduate work that fulfill current degree requirements are not part of the program of study but should be listed on an Attachment Form (http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/pdf_forms/grad_prog_of_study_attach_ed.pdf) to record the student's fulfillment of these requirements.

Program of Study Changes

If a program of study submitted to the Graduate School subsequently changes, the student must submit a Change of Program (http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/pdf_forms/change_to_graduate_program_of_study.pdf) form approved by his/her committee and graduate coordinator to effect the additions and/or deletions.

Minor

A student is required to complete the minimum number of hours required on the program (Summary Graduate Council 2001-02) and may be permitted to enroll in a minor area to satisfy the remaining credit hours. A minor is a current block of approved coursework derived from a master's or doctoral

degree program or concentration other than the major department program and must be approved by the student's committee. A GPA of 3.00 on the minor coursework is required. A minor in a master's program requires

- at least 9 hours of current graduate coursework in the approved area;
- approval of the student's major professor;
- approval of the graduate coordinator from the minor area (per Graduate Council, March 2005);
- a member from the minor area on the student's graduate committee;
- completion of any additional requirements as specified by committee members from the major and minor areas.

Up to one-third of the 9 required hours for a master's minor may be transferred to MSU. The credit hours must be academically relevant and fall within the time-limit requirements for the student's program (per Graduate Council September 2005 and March 2010). See Transfer Credit under Program of Study (<http://catalog.msstate.edu/archives/2014-15/graduate/academic-policies/program-of-study>) .

Transfer and Sharing of Credit Hours

A total of 9 credit hours can be **shared** between two MSU degrees in which a student is enrolled concurrently (see Dual Degrees in this publication). For those cases other than dual degrees, a total of 9 credit hours can be **shared** or **transferred** to a student's program of study. The three potential sources of credit hours are one or a combination of the following: those earned as a student in a graduate program at another university, whether or not used to satisfy the requirements of a previously earned degree (**transferred**); those earned in another graduate program at MSU, whether or not used to satisfy the requirements of a previously earned degree (**shared**); and those earned as an unclassified student at MSU (**transferred** to a degree program). Credit hours can be shared between or transferred to degrees of the same or different level (Graduate Council, November 2011). See Transfer Credit below for more information on the Transfer policy.

Transfer Credit

Transfer credit hours from other domestic universities, international universities or military educational programs may be used to fulfill requirements for master's degrees at MSU provided they meet the criteria established in the General Requirements of the Graduate School. At the master's level, transfer credit can constitute up to 9 semester hours of coursework except for programs requiring more than 40 hours, in which case transfer credits may constitute up to 30 percent of the total credit hours. All thesis research credit hours in the thesis option must be taken at MSU. Up to one-third of the required hours toward fulfillment of a minor (9 hours at the master's level) may be transferred to MSU. Only courses in which grades of B or higher were earned are accepted for transfer. Transfer credit can be accepted for those courses that are relevant in content at completion of the degree and fall within the eight-year time limit for the current program (per Graduate Council September 2005 and March 2010). A Transfer Approval form signed by the student's graduate committee must be submitted to the Graduate School with an official transcript, unless the transcript was submitted with the student's admission application. In either case, the form must be processed so that the transfer credits will appear on the MSU transcript.

Master's Comprehensive Examination

A final comprehensive examination is required of all degree candidates, except those in programs that do not vary from a required program of study (per Graduate Council, May 2004). The following policy requirements must be met.

- Master's degree candidates are required to take an oral examination, a written examination, or both.
- A student must be enrolled at MSU during the semester the exam is administered. A student taking a comprehensive examination during the summer semester can be enrolled in any summer term to fulfill this policy.
- The examination date must take place by the deadline found in the Graduate Academic Calendar (<http://catalog.msstate.edu/archives/2014-15/graduate/academic-calendar>) .
- A student in a thesis-option program may be required to take a comprehensive examination in addition to the thesis defense. These students must check the specific requirements of their program.
- A student must have a 3.00 GPA on all coursework after admission to the program (i.e., program and non-program courses).
- The student must be within the last 6 hours or in the terminal semester (per Graduate Council, May 2006) of coursework excluding internship/practicum courses (per Graduate Council, September 2004).
- The Declaration of Examination/Defense (http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/pdf_forms/comprehensive_exam_announcement.pdf) form must be submitted to the Graduate School at least two weeks prior to the scheduled date of examination.
- The candidate's examination should demonstrate:
 - a. the candidate's thorough familiarity with the literature in the major field;
 - b. the relation of the special subject to allied subjects; and
 - c. the level of general knowledge and training, including use of oral and written English.
- One negative vote **will not** constitute failure for a student on a preliminary/comprehensive examination. Two negative votes **will** constitute failure for a student on a preliminary/comprehensive examination (per Graduate Council, October 2005).
- Following the examination, the major professor must promptly submit the completed examination results form, whether pass or fail, to the Office of the Graduate School by the deadline. **Submission of the report by the student is prohibited.**

- A student who fails the comprehensive exam can apply to schedule another examination after a period of four months has elapsed from the date of the original exam. Two failures result in the student's removal as a master's degree candidate.

Master's Theses

Thesis Defense

- A student in a thesis-option master's program must submit a thesis to complete degree requirements. Thesis research is subject to review and approval by the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB).
- The student must be enrolled at MSU in the semester he/she defends the thesis. A student defending during the summer semester can be enrolled in any summer term to fulfill this policy.
- A public presentation of the thesis research and defense before the student's graduate committee is required. The presentation is open to any member of the graduate faculty and the dean and associate dean of the Graduate School. The student or a committee member may request that the Graduate School appoint an outside observer to attend.
- The defense should be scheduled no sooner than seven days after the final manuscript has been distributed to all committee members.
- The defense must take place by the deadline found in the Graduate Academic Calendar (<http://catalog.msstate.edu/archives/2014-15/graduate/academic-calendar>) in this publication.
- The Declaration of Examination/Defense (http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/academic-policies/masters-requirements/Access%20the%20form%20at%20http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/pdf_forms/comprehensive_exam_announcement.pdf.html) form must be submitted to the Graduate School at least two weeks prior to the scheduled examination date.
- The student's graduate committee will evaluate content and style of the completed thesis. One negative vote **will not** constitute failure for a student on an oral thesis defense. Two negative votes **will** constitute failure for a student on an oral thesis defense (per Graduate Council, October 2005).
- Following the defense, the student's committee must complete the examination results report, whether pass or fail, and submit the original and a copy to the Office of the Graduate School by the deadline. **Submission of the report by the student is prohibited.**
- Six hours of research credit are awarded upon the successful completion of the thesis and its submission to the Library, regardless of the number of thesis/research hours the student successfully completed. A grade of S (satisfactory) or U (unsatisfactory) is awarded for thesis credit. A student cannot graduate with a U grade in the final semester.
- The manual entitled *Standards for Preparing Theses and Dissertations* (http://library.msstate.edu/content/templates/level2-dept-otd/docs/standards_6th_ed.pdf) (6th edition, revised 2012) describes the regulations governing thesis preparation and must be followed. The student should access the *Standards* and review the information found on the Office of Thesis and Dissertation Format Review (<http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/academic-policies/masters-requirements/library.msstate.edu/thesis>) website.
- A student who fails to defend the thesis successfully can apply to schedule another defense after a period of four months has elapsed from the date of the original defense. Two failures result in the student's dismissal as a master's degree candidate.

Thesis Submission

- The student must meet the Library's initial and final submission deadlines posted in the Graduate Academic Calendar (<http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/academic-policies/masters-requirements/A%20student%20who%20fails%20to%20defend%20the%20thesis%20successfully%20can%20apply%20to%20schedule%20another%20defense%20after%20a%20period%20of%20four%20months%20has%20elapsed%20from%20the%20date%20of%20the%20original%20defense.%20Two%20failures%20result%20in%20the%20student%E2%80%99s%20dismissal%20as%20a%20master%E2%80%99s%20degree%20candidate.html>) .
- The student must be enrolled in at least one credit hour at MSU during the semester(s) of both the initial and final submissions to the Library. A student submitting in the summer semester may be enrolled in any summer term to fulfill this policy.
- The student submits the thesis electronically. Submission must be in Portable Document Format (PDF) and uploaded to the Library's electronic theses and dissertations (ETD) database.
- The committee signature page complete with required signatures must be submitted in print to the Library before the thesis will be reviewed. For security reasons, signatures should not be scanned for the PDF document; this page will remain absent of signatures for the electronic version. The Library will retain a copy of the signature page with the original signatures for archival purposes.
- The University has an agreement with ProQuest Information and Learning Company (ProQuest) for the microfilming of all theses. Under this agreement, two microfilm copies of the complete thesis will be made and, if desired, the document will be copyrighted with the copyright in the name of the author. The microfilm will be published in the ProQuest Dissertations and Theses (PQDT) electronic database and the full document made available to subscribing institutions. There is no longer a fee for publishing theses. The fee for copyrighting is \$55.00; one may also ask ProQuest to publish the document with open access for \$95.00. As an alternative to copyrighting through ProQuest, copyright can be achieved by submitting to <http://www.copyright.gov> for a \$35 fee.

Master's Time Limit

Eight years is the time limit for completion of master's degree requirements (per Graduate Council, March 2010). An Extension of Time (http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/pdf_forms/request_for_extension_of_time.pdf) form must be used to request a one-year extension if needed under well-justified, extenuating circumstances. The request must be approved by the major professor and dean of the college and submitted to the Office of the

Graduate School (per Graduate Council, May 2005). A second request must also be approved by the Office of the Graduate School and the Office of the Provost.