

# 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/2016-17/graduate/degrees-majors-offered>) for a complete list. Consult Admissions Information (<http://catalog.msstate.edu/archives/2016-17/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](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.

### 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](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](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.
- 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.
- 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.
- A student who has taken a course at the 4000 level is not allowed to enroll in the same course for credit at the 6000 level without explicit permission of the instructor and graduate coordinator of the department offering the course, and the dean of the Graduate School.
- 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](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](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 minor is a current block of approved coursework derived from a current MSU degree program or concentration other than the major program. The option of a minor is at the discretion of the major area in which the program is offered and must be approved by the student's major professor and/or graduate committee. The minor coursework is designated on the student's Program of Study.

Up to one-third of the required hours for a minor may be transferred to MSU. Hours transferred toward fulfillment of a minor must be relevant in content to the graduate program when the degree is awarded and must fit within the time-limit requirements for the student's degree program.

A minor in a master's or educational specialist program must meet the following requirements.

- At least 9 hours of graduate coursework in the minor field of study.
- Approval of the student's major professor and/or graduate committee.
- Approval of the graduate coordinator from the minor area.
- An MSU Graduate Faculty member from the minor area who serves as minor professor on the student's graduate committee.
- Fulfillment of any additional requirements as specified by the major and minor areas.
- A 3.00 GPA on the minor coursework.

## 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. 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. See the Transfer Credit (<http://catalog.msstate.edu/archives/2016-17/graduate/academic-policies/program-of-study/#transferstext>) section and the Transferred and Shared Credit Hours (<http://catalog.msstate.edu/archives/2016-17/graduate/academic-policies/program-of-study/#transferstext>) section for additional details.

## 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. 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/2016-17/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 of coursework excluding internship/practicum courses.
- The Declaration of Examination/Defense ([http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/pdf\\_forms/comprehensive\\_exam\\_announcement.pdf](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.
- 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 Thesis

### Thesis Preparation

All candidates for a thesis-option master's degree must submit a thesis to complete degree program requirements. The student's graduate committee must approve the thesis topic, the outline, and the final submission. Thesis research is subject to review and approval by the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

The student must register for at least the minimum number of required thesis/research hours (6). Upon the final submission of the thesis to Mitchell Memorial Library, the student is awarded credit for the six hours of thesis/research, regardless of the actual number of hours earned.

The manual entitled *Standards for Preparing Theses and Dissertations* (6<sup>th</sup> edition, 2012) describes the regulations governing dissertation preparation and must be followed. The student should access the *Standards* and review Office of Thesis and Dissertation Format Review information at <http://library.msstate.edu/thesis/index.asp>.

### Thesis Defense

Both a public presentation of the thesis research and a thesis defense are required. While the presentation is open to the general public, the defense is open to any member of the Graduate Faculty including the Dean and Associate Dean of the Graduate School. The student must be enrolled at MSU during the semester of the thesis defense. A student defending during the summer semester can enroll in any summer term to fulfill this policy. The following requirements must be met.

- The defense must occur by the deadline posted on the Graduate Academic Calendar (<http://catalog.msstate.edu/archives/2016-17/graduate/academic-calendar>).
- To allow time for careful and thoughtful evaluation and discussion, the examination for the oral thesis defense should be scheduled no sooner than seven days after the final manuscript has been distributed to all committee members and graduate coordinator. Typically, committee members and graduate coordinator are provided a minimum of two weeks to review the final manuscript prior to the defense.
- The time and location of the presentation and defense must be announced to all faculty, staff, and students in the academic department at least two weeks prior.
- The Declaration of Examination/Defense ([http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/pdf\\_forms/comprehensive\\_exam\\_announcement.pdf](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.
- The student, graduate coordinator, or a committee member may request that the Graduate School appoint an outside observer to attend the dissertation defense.
- The student's graduate committee will evaluate content of the completed thesis. One negative vote **will not** constitute failure for a student on a thesis defense. Two negative votes **will** constitute failure for a student on a thesis defense.
- A grade of S for satisfactory or U for unsatisfactory is given for thesis credit. A student cannot graduate with a U grade in the final semester.
- A student who fails to defend his/her thesis successfully can apply to schedule another defense after a period of four months has elapsed from the date of the original. Two failures to defend the thesis will result in the student's removal from candidacy.
- Following the defense, the student's committee must complete the examination results report, whether pass or fail, and submit both the original and a copy to the Graduate School by the deadline. **Submission of the report by the student is prohibited.**

### Thesis Submission

- The student must meet the Library's initial and final submission requirements and deadlines posted in the Graduate Academic Calendar (<http://catalog.msstate.edu/archives/2016-17/graduate/academic-calendar>).
- The student must be enrolled in at least one graduate 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 to the Library before the thesis will be reviewed. Signatures represent that the signer is satisfied with the contents of the document and that no further changes will be made to the content. Any subsequent content changes will require a newly signed signature page to allow for each member to re-evaluate the document including the new changes. 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 for archival purposes.
- The University has an agreement with ProQuest Information and Learning Company (ProQuest) for the archiving of all theses. Under this agreement, and, if desired, the document will be copyrighted with the copyright in the name of the author. The hard-bound copies will be published in the ProQuest Dissertations and Theses (PQDT) electronic database and the full document made available to subscribing institutions. The author is also free to use any other method available to create physical copies of their approved work. 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. An Extension of Time ([http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/pdf\\_forms/request\\_for\\_extension\\_of\\_time.pdf](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 for approval by the Dean of the Graduate School. In the rare circumstance that a second request is made, additional approvals are required, including approval of the Dean of the Graduate School and the Provost. This request must be made using the Request for Additional Extension of Time ([http://www.grad.msstate.edu/files/extend\\_time.pdf](http://www.grad.msstate.edu/files/extend_time.pdf)) form.