

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/graduate/degrees-majors-offered>) for a complete list.
- Check Requirements Quick Reference (<http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/admissions-information/requirements-quick-reference>) for admission requirements for specific programs.
- Consult Admissions Information (<http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/admissions-information>) and the specific master's program description in the correct College and Degree Programs (<http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/colleges-degree-programs>) section.
- Go to the Graduate School (<http://www.grad.msstate.edu>) website to apply online.

Master's Graduate Committee

Committee Composition

- For a master's degree committee, a minimum of three members are required and they must hold either a Level 1 or Level 2 Graduate Faculty appointment. One member may be a minor professor, if the student has a minor program.
- The major professor is chair of the committee, must hold Level 1 or Level 2 Graduate Faculty status, and must be from the student's major department/program.
- A limited number of Non-Graduate Faculty members may serve on a committee. Non-Graduate Faculty members are expected to have a graduate degree or commensurate expertise in the field of study. The decision regarding the qualifications of a Non-Graduate Faculty member to serve on a master's degree committee will be determined by the department/college.
- In all cases where the committee consists of numbers above the minimum, greater than 50% of the committee members must hold Graduate Faculty status.
- Non-Graduate Faculty committee members cannot serve as a major professor or committee chair.
- Non-Graduate Faculty committee members can serve as a co-thesis director of the research along with a Level 1 or Level 2 member of the Graduate Faculty for students in a thesis-option program. If this occurs, it is expected that the Non-Graduate Faculty committee member will have education and research expertise commensurate with Level 1 or Level 2 Graduate Faculty.
- The Committee Request (http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/pdf_forms/graduate_program_of_study.pdf) form is submitted to 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) form to the Graduate School reporting the changes. 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 credit 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 C (http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/pdf_forms/graduate_program_of_study.pdf) APP Compliance consisting of all courses and research credits required for degree completion according to Graduate School policy and the program requirements in the *Catalog of the Graduate School* for the academic year the student was admitted and enrolled.

- 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.
- Non-thesis coursework requirements consist of a minimum of 30 hours of coursework, with at least 15 hours at 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 used toward coursework completion requirements of a graduate degree.
- A maximum of 6 credit hours of Directed Individual Study (DIS) coursework can taken toward the degree. DIS courses are designated as 7000-level credit hours and may be used to meet the 8000-level course requirement.
- A student who took 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.

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 must be approved by the student's major professor and/or graduate committee. The minor coursework is designated as such on the student's CAPP Compliance, and the student's committee must include a minor professor.

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 minor and meet time-limit requirements for the degree.

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
- A 3.00 GPA on the minor coursework

Transfer Credit

Transfer credit can be accepted for courses that are relevant in content toward completion of a degree and fall within the eight-year time limit for a master's degree. 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). See the Transfer Credit (<http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/academic-policies/program-of-study/#transferstext>) section and the Transferred and Shared Credit Hours (<http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/academic-policies/program-of-study/#transferstext>) section for additional details.

- A student may transfer up to 9 semester hours of coursework with grades of B or higher taken at other domestic universities, international universities or military educational programs to meet requirements for a master's degree at MSU if the courses meet the Graduate School and departmental requirements.
- If a master's program requires more than 40 hours, the committee may approve transfer credits of up to 30 percent of the required credits.
- International and military transfer credits are given S grades on the MSU transcript.
- Thesis research credit hours cannot be transferred.
- A student with a minor may transfer up to one-third of the required hours for a minor (9 hours at the master's level).

Master's Comprehensive Examination

A final comprehensive examination is required of all non-thesis degree candidates except those in a prescribed program that was approved without this requirement. A student in a thesis-option program may be required to take a comprehensive examination in addition to the thesis defense (see program requirements). The following examination 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 in a graduate course 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.
- The examination date must meet the deadline posted on the Graduate Academic Calendar (<http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/academic-calendar>).
- A student in a thesis-option program may be required to take a comprehensive examination in addition to the thesis defense.
- A student must have a 3.00 GPA when sitting for the examination.
- 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) form must be submitted to the Graduate School at least two weeks prior to the scheduled date of examination announcing the examination and confirming completion of requirements.
- The candidate's examination should demonstrate the following.
 - a. the candidate's thorough familiarity with the literature in the major field
 - b. the relation of the special subject to allied subjects
 - 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 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 three 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. The student's graduate committee must approve the thesis topic, the outline, and both the initial and final submissions to the Library. 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 6 hours of thesis/research, regardless of the actual number of hours earned.

The manual entitled *Standards for Preparing Theses and Dissertations* (6th 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 following requirements must be met.

- The student must be enrolled at MSU during the semester of the defense. A student defending during the summer semester can enroll in any summer term.
- The defense must occur by the deadline posted on the Graduate Academic Calendar (<http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/academic-calendar>).
- A student in a thesis-option program may be required to take a comprehensive examination in addition to the thesis defense.
- A student must have a 3.00 GPA when sitting for the defense.
- The student must be within the last 6 hours or in the terminal semester of coursework excluding internship/practicum courses to defend.
- 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 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 announcing the defense and confirming completion of requirements.
- The student, Graduate Coordinator, or a committee member may request that the Graduate School appoint an outside observer to attend the thesis 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.
- 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.**
- A student who fails to defend his/her thesis successfully can apply to schedule another defense after a period of three months has elapsed from the date of the original. Two failures to defend the thesis will result in the student's removal from candidacy.

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/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.
- 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. 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.

Late Thesis Submission (after Initial and Final Submission Deadlines published in the Graduate Calendar)

Graduate students who pass the thesis defense by the end of a semester and meet all other graduation requirements except the deadlines for thesis submission to the Library may adhere to the following procedure.

- Defend their thesis no later than the end of the semester. End of semester is defined as the date/time grades are due to the Registrar's Office. This date is posted each semester on the Graduate Calendar (<http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/academic-policies/masters-requirements/Graduate%20Calendar>) and the University Calendar.
- Enroll in a zero-credit hour course (GRD 9010 01) the following semester. The zero-credit hour course shall have an associated fee of \$100. Students are allowed to enroll in the zero-credit hour course only one time.
- Students enrolled in the zero-credit hour course must meet all of that semester's Library submission and graduation application deadlines.

GRD 9010

Graduate Degree Completion

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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) 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) form.