

Master's Degree Requirements

- Academic departments in the 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/2024-25/graduate/degrees-majors-offered/>) for a complete list.
- Check Requirements Quick Reference (<http://catalog.msstate.edu/archives/2024-25/graduate/admissions-information/requirements-quick-reference/>) for admission requirements for specific programs.
- Consult Admissions Information (<http://catalog.msstate.edu/archives/2024-25/graduate/admissions-information/>) and the specific master's program description in the correct College and Degree Programs (<http://catalog.msstate.edu/archives/2024-25/graduate/colleges-degree-programs/>) section.
- To apply online, please visit the Graduate School (<http://www.grad.msstate.edu/>) website at <https://www.grad.msstate.edu/>. (<https://www.grad.msstate.edu/>)

Graduate Committee

Please refer to the Graduate Committee Section (<http://catalog.msstate.edu/archives/2024-25/graduate/academic-policies/graduate-committee/>). (<http://catalog.msstate.edu/archives/2024-25/graduate/academic-policies/graduate-committee/>)

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. At the program level, students are encouraged to develop a plan of study in consultation with their major professor and committee at the inception of their program, ideally no later than upon completion of 9-12 credit hours of coursework.

- Thesis-option students must include at least 24 hours of graduate coursework and 6 hours of research/thesis. A minimum of 9 coursework credit hours, exclusive of thesis/research credits, must be at the 8000 level or higher. Enrollment in LIB 9010 during the final semester is mandatory to meet the Graduate School requirements for graduation.
- Non-thesis coursework requirements consist of a minimum of 30 hours of coursework, with at least 12 hours at the 8000 level or higher.
- A maximum of 6 credit hours of Directed Individual Study (DIS) coursework can be 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 grade of S for satisfactory or U for unsatisfactory is given for thesis/research credit. A student cannot graduate with a U grade in the final semester; and thesis research hours where a grade of U is earned cannot be used to meet the 6-hour credit requirement.

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. Some programs may also require thesis students to complete a comprehensive exam in addition to a thesis defense. The following examination requirements must be met:

- A student must be enrolled in at least 1 hour in 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 for the semester in which the student plans to graduate.
- A student must have a 3.00 or higher 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 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; 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. In the absence of a committee, one negative vote **will** constitute failure.
- The student's committee must complete and submit the examination results report form no later than one week from the date of the pass/fail decision. This form must be submitted by the deadline stated in the Graduate Academic Calendar for the student to be eligible for graduation. **The form must be submitted by a faculty or staff member of the program.**
- 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, unless the program has a more stringent protocol.

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 and the initial and final submissions. Thesis research may be subject to review and approval by the appropriate University regulatory committee(s) or unit(s) (Office of Research Security, Office of Research Compliance, etc.).

Thesis format guidelines can be accessed at <http://library.msstate.edu/thesis/index.asp> (<http://library.msstate.edu/thesis/>). Students are required to prepare their theses following these guidelines and are subject to the review and approval of the Office of Thesis and Dissertation Format Review in the MSU Libraries.

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 only to members of the Graduate Faculty affiliated with the program (see the program Graduate Faculty (<http://catalog.msstate.edu/archives/2024-25/graduate/faculty/>) listing). 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 in the semester in which the student plans to graduate.
- 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 or higher 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.
- Typically, committee members and the Graduate Coordinator are provided a minimum of two weeks to review the final document prior to the defense.
- 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 of a thesis defense. Two negative votes **will** constitute failure of a thesis defense.
- The student's committee must complete and submit the examination results report form no later than one week from the date of the thesis defense. This form must be submitted by the deadline stated in the Graduate Academic Calendar for the student to be eligible for graduation. **The form must be submitted by a faculty or staff member of the program.**
- 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 defense. Two failures to defend the thesis will result in the student's removal as a master's degree candidate, unless the program has a more stringent protocol.

Thesis Submission

- The student must meet the initial and final submission requirements and deadlines set by the program, college, MSU Libraries, and the Graduate School. Some colleges and/or programs may have deadlines that precede the deadline in the Graduate Academic Calendar.
- The student must be enrolled in at least one graduate credit hour and LIB 9010 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 through CANVAS as part of LIB 9010. The final submission must be in Portable Document Format (PDF) and uploaded to the Library's Institutional Repository (Scholar's Junction) 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 signers are 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 each member to re-evaluate the document, including the new changes. 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 author is also free to use any other method available to create physical copies of their approved work. Fees for copyrighting the document can be found on the Thesis/Dissertation page of the MSU Libraries' website.

Time Limit

Eight years is the time limit for completion of a master's degree. A Request for an Extension of Time form must be used to request an extension for up to two years if needed under well-justified, extenuating circumstances. The request must be approved by the major professor, Graduate Coordinator, Department Head (if applicable), and the Academic Dean and submitted to 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 form.