Graduate School Academic Regulations

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Master's Degree

Degrees higher than the baccalaureate are granted at the University of Mississippi because of special attainments achieved by degree candidates. Prospective students should understand clearly that a graduate degree is not awarded upon the basis of a collection of course credits, or the passing of certain prescribed examinations, or the submission of a thesis or dissertation. In other words, the student cannot expect to receive a higher degree because of successfully completing the individual parts of the degree program. Course schedules, examinations, and other requirements explained in this catalog are to be regarded as minimal; and any student may be required to satisfy whatever additional requirements academic advisers deem appropriate.

To receive a higher degree from the University of Mississippi, the student must demonstrate to the satisfaction of the graduate faculty of the department, school, or college of the student and to the faculty of the university that the student has attained through intelligence, scholarship, industry, and personal qualities the high level of professional and academic competence that the faculty of each department expects of a person holding the degree being sought. The determination of fitness to qualify for the degree rests solely upon the estimate that the faculty makes of the student's right to the degree. (See also "Operational Procedures" section, and see the School of Law and School of Pharmacy sections for information about the J.D. and Pharm.D. degrees.)

The requirements stated below are basic for all master's degrees. Additional departmental requirements may be found preceding the lists of courses offered in the various departments.

Semester Hours

A minimum of 30 semester hours of graduate credit is required for all master's degrees (with the exception of Master of Fine Arts degrees, as mentioned below). Specific degree programs may require more than these minima. For degree programs in which the thesis is required or included, 24 semester hours of course work are required in addition to a minimum of 6 semester hours thesis credit. Graduate students in a master's degree program must complete a minimum of 18 hours of formal classroom lecture courses; that is, courses that require regular attendance, study assignments, final examinations, and quality grades, and that are not designated or conducted as workshops, group study, directed study, directed readings, field study, practicum, internships, etc. No more than 6 hours of Z-graded courses may be applied toward the degree program, and a minimum of 24 hours must be taken in courses other than internships and practicums.

The Master of Fine Arts degree, which is offered in art and creative writing, requires a minimum of 54 semester hours in the subject area, two years of academic residency, and a thesis project of 6 semester hours. Up to 30 hours beyond the bachelor's degree may be waived by the department on the basis of previous graduate work completed in the subject field. The last 30 hours of this degree must meet the time limit requirement for completion of master's degrees.

Final Examination

Except for students enrolled in a program that has a comparable culminating experience and has received approval of the Graduate Council, every candidate for a master's degree must pass a final written or oral examination administered by a committee appointed by the dean of the Graduate School and recommended by the chair of the department or the program coordinator of the program to which the student was admitted. The committee must be composed of three members of the graduate faculty (associate or full) in the student's department or graduate program, with one member designated as chair.

The oral examination shall cover the candidate's graduate courses, the general background of the field of study, and thesis (if the thesis is required). The oral examination may be taken only after the student has satisfied the foreign language requirement (if any) and the thesis (when required) is in final form (that is, ready for submission to the graduate dean except for corrections required by the oral examining committee at the oral examination). The dean of the Graduate School will not schedule oral examinations during the regular university examination periods at the end of enrollment periods or between semesters. Final oral or written examinations for master's degrees should be administered no earlier than midterm of the semester in which the candidate is enrolled in the final courses, excluding thesis hours, required for the degree.

A department or division may require supplementary oral or written examinations and may require additional course work of candidates whose oral examinations are unsatisfactory. However, the course work will not replace the requirement that candidates successfully complete a final oral or written examination.

Major and Minor Fields

As a rule, requirements at the master's level preclude the designation of a minor area. In special instances, with the approval of the major department and the dean of the Graduate School, the candidate may plan a program that includes 6 to 12 hours in one area or 6 hours in each of two areas. A concentration of less than 6 hours will not be considered a minor.

Time Limit

All work applying to a master's degree must be completed within a six-year time period. All students whose work has been interrupted by involuntary service in the armed forces are allowed six years in addition to the time spent in the armed services. This exception does not apply to career military personnel.

The University of Mississippi is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges to award certificates and baccalaureate, master's, specialist, and doctoral degrees. Contact the Commission on Colleges at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097, call 404-679-4500, or visit online at www.sacscoc.org for questions about the accreditation.

Grades received for courses taken for master's degrees that do not fall within the time limit for completion of all degree requirements will not be used in determining the overall grade-point average.

Thesis

Except for the nonthesis option programs in communication sciences and disorders, economics, education, engineering science, history, mathematics, modern languages, philosophy, physics, sociology, and Southern studies, a thesis is required for all candidates for the degree of Master of Arts and Master of Science. In programs requiring a thesis, candidates must register for 6 semester hours of thesis. A student who has obtained 6 semester hours of thesis credit without completing the thesis, and who has completed all course work, must enroll for 3 semester hours of thesis or course work each subsequent semester in order to obtain library and parking permits, student housing, etc. For summer graduates, enrollment may be in either first, second or full summer term, but an enrollment during the intersession will not fulfill this requirement. If the degree is not awarded at the end of the semester or summer term, as anticipated, another registration for 3 semester hours is required in the semester in which the degree is granted.

Regulations governing the style, format, paper, abstract and other matters may be found in A Manual of Theses and Dissertations available in the Graduate School Office. After the oral examination has been accepted, the student must present to the Graduate School two unbound copies of the thesis. A copy of the abstract and the thesis binding fee receipt must accompany the copies of the thesis.

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