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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 minimums; 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.)

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. Specific degree programs may require more than the minimum number of hours. 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 of 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 in the student's department or graduate program, all of whom must be associate or full members of the graduate faculty, with one member designated as chair.

Unless the program specifies otherwise within their policies, for all students required to complete a thesis, the chair of the thesis shall review and provide guidance on the thesis prior to the student's submission of the thesis to the other members of the committee. Generally, the chair will approve the student to submit the thesis to other members of the committee and the proposal and defense meetings will only occur after the chair has approved the thesis draft to be sent to the committee. The student may also consult with others on the project when expertise of other committee members may be required earlier in the review process. Departments that wish to use a different process of approving the thesis (proposal or defense document) to be sent to the committee must specify such in their handbook. In the absence of other documentation, the Graduate School policy shall direct the process. Unless otherwise specified, faculty will complete the review of a thesis draft (proposal or defense) within 2 weeks. Programs may establish other timelines for faculty to return thesis documents with suggestions, corrections, or edits to students. In such cases, those timelines must be included in the program handbook. Graduate students should understand that it is common to require review of multiple drafts and should anticipate that the revision process may require multiple rounds of such review. In addition, the 2-week timeline only applies when faculty are on contract and the institution is open for business. In instances where the chair or committee member requires more time to review the thesis than the 2 weeks established here or the timeline established in the program handbook, such information must be communicated to the student as early as possible and typically in writing. 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. 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

In programs requiring a thesis, candidates must register for 4-6 semester hours of thesis (only if a program requires fewer than 6 hours, such that the program requires more than 24 nonthesis hours and officially specifies a minimum of 4 or 5 hours in the catalog, may a student complete fewer than 6 hours). Students who have obtained the required semester hours of thesis credit (as specified by their program) without completing the thesis, and who have completed all coursework, must enroll for 3 semester hours of thesis or coursework 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.

A written thesis must conform to the regulations governing the style, format, paper, abstract and other matters may be found on the website of the Graduate School. In addition, each student must include a statement outlining how they used Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the completion of the thesis (students who did not use AI in any form in completing the thesis should include that in their statement). The statement shall document the specific uses and contributions from AI. A digital version of the thesis must be uploaded to ProQuest or another platform accepted by the Graduate School for approval by the Graduate School after the final examination for the master's degree has been accepted and before the beginning of the regular examination period for the semester in which the candidate plans to graduate. The University does not allow a permanent embargo of theses due to its status as a state institution.

