MASTER'S DEGREE POLICIES

Approved Program
The entire course of study undertaken for any master’s degree must constitute a unified, coherent program that is approved by the student’s advisor and Graduate Director and meets Graduate School requirements.

Credit Hours
A minimum of thirty credit hours in courses acceptable for credit towards a graduate degree is required (some degree programs require more than 30 credits). For a master’s degree with the thesis option, six of the 30 credit hours must be thesis research credits (799). For the master’s degree with the non-thesis option, a minimum of 18 credit hours in courses numbered 600 and above is required, as well as one or more scholarly papers, some portion of which must be written. In many cases, successful completion of comprehensive examinations is required by the program.

Coursework Level
The graduate program must include at least 12 hours of course work at the 600 level or higher; no fewer than 12 hours of course work credit must be earned in the major subject approved by the graduate program in which the student is enrolled.

Prerequisites and Inclusion of Credit
If the student is inadequately prepared for the required graduate courses, additional courses may be deemed necessary; such courses will not be considered part of the student’s approved program of study.

Single Credit Application
Credits to be applied to a student’s program for a master’s degree cannot have been used to satisfy any other previously earned degrees (see policies governing the applicability of previously taken courses to University of Maryland degrees).

Graduate School Requirements for the Degrees of Master of Arts and Master of Science
A thesis must be submitted for the Master of Arts or Master of Science degrees except for those programs for which a non-thesis option has been approved by the Graduate Council. Approval of the thesis is the responsibility of an Examining Committee appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School on the recommendation of the student’s advisor. The advisor is normally the chairperson of the committee, and the remaining members of the committee are members of the graduate faculty who are familiar with the student’s program of study. The chairperson and the candidate are informed of the membership of the Examining Committee by the Graduate School staff on behalf of the Dean of the Graduate School.

Research Assurances

Human Subject Research
Everyone at the University of Maryland who is conducting research that involves human subjects must obtain approval in advance from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB is charged with approving the initiation of research involving human subjects and conduct periodi

Other Research
If the thesis research involves the use of vertebrate animals, animal use protocols must be approved in advance by the Animal Care and Use Committee. If the thesis research involves hazardous materials, either biological or chemical, or recombinant RNA/DNA, the research must be approved by the appropriate University committee. These research assurances must be approved prior to the initiation of any thesis-related research, and the approvals must be provided to the Graduate School at the time the student submits the Nomination of Examining Committee form.

The Master's Thesis Examination
A final oral examination of the thesis will be held when the student has completed the thesis to the satisfaction of the student’s advisor, all other requirements for the degree have been completed, and a 3.0 grade point average (computed in accordance with the regulations described under “Grades for Graduate students”) has been earned.

Establishment of the Thesis Examining Committee
The Thesis Examining Committee is appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School, in accordance with the policies listed below:

• Eligibility. A student is eligible to be examined on a thesis if the student:
  a. has met all program requirements for a thesis examination,
  b. is in good standing as a graduate student at the University,
  c. is registered for at least one credit,
  d. has a valid Graduate School-approved Thesis Examining Committee,
  e. has at least a 3.0 grade point average, and
  f. if this is the second examination, the examination has been approved by the Graduate School.

• Thesis Examining Committee Membership. The Committee will include a minimum of three members of the Graduate Faculty, at least two of whom will be Full Members. The Chair of the Committee normally will be the student’s advisor, who will be a Full or Associate Member of the Graduate Faculty, or who has been granted an exception to the policy by the Dean of the Graduate School.

• Membership on a Thesis Examining Committee. Requires nomination by the student’s advisor and Graduate Director in the student’s graduate program, and approval by the Dean of the Graduate School. The nomination of a Thesis Examining Committee should be provided to the Graduate School at least six weeks before the date of the expected thesis examination. The thesis examination cannot be held until the Graduate School approves the composition of the Thesis Examining Committee. Furthermore, if the Graduate Faculty status of any member of an approved Thesis Examining Committee changes, the approval of the Thesis Examining Committee may be voided, and a new Committee nomination form will be required for approval by the Graduate School.
• Chair. The Thesis Examining Committee will have as chair the student’s advisor, who must be a Full or Associate Member of the Graduate Faculty or, by special permission, has been otherwise appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School. Thesis Examining Committees may have co-chairs upon the written recommendation of the Graduate Director and with the approval of the Dean of the Graduate School.

Procedures for the Oral Examination

Oral Examination Requirement. Each master’s thesis student must defend orally his or her master’s thesis as a requirement in partial fulfillment of the master’s degree (an additional comprehensive written examination may be required at the option of the program.)

• Committee Preparation. The members of the Thesis Examining Committee must receive the thesis at least seven working days before the scheduled examination. Should the Thesis Examining Committee deem it reasonable and appropriate, it may require submission of the thesis more than seven working days in advance of the examination.

• Attendance at the Examination. Oral examinations must be attended by all members of the student’s officially established Thesis Examining Committee as approved by the Dean of the Graduate School. All examinations must be open to members of University of Maryland Graduate Faculty. Programs may wish routinely to open thesis examinations to a broader audience. In such cases, program policies must be established, recorded, and made available to all master’s students. Should a last-minute change in the constitution of the Thesis Examining Committee be required, the change must be approved by the Dean of the Graduate School in consultation with the program’s Graduate Director and the chair of the student’s Thesis Examining Committee.

• Remote Participation in Examinations. The Graduate School policy is that all members of a Thesis Examining Committee must be physically present in the examination room during the entire defense and during the committee’s private deliberations following the examination. Participation by telephone is not permitted under any circumstances. While re-affirming this policy, the Graduate Council approved a policy to permit remote participation by video teleconferencing under the following circumstances:

  • Permission to conduct a remote-participation defense must be obtained by the thesis chair from the Graduate School in advance. In making this request, the chair must indicate in writing that he or she has read the rules for a remote defense listed below.
  • Approved web-conferencing software must be used that allows all participants to see and hear each other during the entire defense.
  • Only one remote site may be used during the defense.
  • The candidate and the committee chair must both be present in the examination room. Neither may be at the remote site.
  • The program must pay for any costs associated with the remote participation. The remote participant must connect to the defense using hardware that will ensure that all participants are visible and audible and that the connection is stable and available throughout the scheduled time of the defense.

• Location of the Examination. Oral examinations of theses must be held in University facilities that are readily accessible to all members of the Thesis Examining Committee and others attending the examination. The chair of the Thesis Examining Committee selects the time and place for the examination and notifies the other members of the committee and the candidate.

• Emergency Substitutions. The Graduate School is aware that last-minute emergencies can prevent a committee member from attending a scheduled thesis examination. We are prepared to work with the thesis supervisor and/or Graduate Director to make last-minute substitutions in committee membership to allow the defense to take place as scheduled. Please follow these steps to assure a smooth substitution.

  • The request must be sent in writing. Fax or e-mail requests are acceptable. A telephone call to the Dean of the Graduate School to alert the Dean that the emergency request is coming will facilitate the process.
  • The proposed substitute must be a member of the Graduate Faculty consistent with the rules for committee membership. Thus, if a Full Member could not attend, the substitution of an Associate or Special Member of the Graduate Faculty would not be acceptable.
  • Once the written request has been received, the substitution will be made, usually within the hour, provided that the revised committee meets the requirements for committee membership.
  • When the substitution has been made, a written confirmation, in the same format as the request was received (fax or e-mail), will be sent out, along with a telephone confirmation. The substitution is not official, however, until the written confirmation has been received in the department or program.
  • A defense that is held with one or more substitute members on the committee, but without prior written confirmation from the Graduate School that the substitution(s) have been approved, will be voided and the defense will have to be repeated.
  • A copy of the written request and the written confirmation will be placed in the student’s file for future reference.

• Invalidation of the Examination. The Dean may void any examination not carried out in accordance with the procedures and policies of the Graduate School. In addition, upon the recommendation of the Thesis Examining Committee or any member thereof, the Dean of the Graduate School may rule an oral examination to be null and void.

• Conclusion of the Examination. After the oral examination, the student and any others who are not members of the Thesis Examining Committee will be asked to leave the room and the Thesis Examining Committee will discuss whether or not the thesis (including its examination) has been satisfactory.

The Committee has the following options:

  • To accept the thesis without any recommended changes and sign the Report of Examining Committee.
  • To accept the thesis with recommendations for changes and, except for the chair, sign the Report of Examining Committee. The chair will check the thesis and, upon his or her approval, sign the Report of Examining Committee.
  • To recommend revisions to the thesis and not sign the Report of Examining Committee until the student has made the changes and submitted the revised thesis for the Thesis Examining Committee’s approval. The Thesis Examining Committee members sign the Report of Examining Committee when they approve the revised thesis.
• To recommend revisions and convene a second meeting of the Thesis Examining Committee to review the thesis and complete the student’s examination.
• To rule the thesis (including its examination) unsatisfactory. In that circumstance, the student fails.
• Following the examination, the chair must inform the student of the outcome of the examination. The chair signs the Report of the Examining Committee indicating which of the above alternatives has been adopted. A copy of this statement is to be included in the student’s file at the graduate program office, and a copy is given to the student.

Passage or Failure. The student passes if all members of the Thesis Examining Committee accept the thesis (including its examination) as satisfactory. One or more negative votes constitute a failure of the candidate to meet the thesis requirement. In cases of failure, the Thesis Examining Committee must specify in detail and in writing the nature of the deficiencies in the thesis and/or the oral performance that led to failure. This statement is to be submitted to the program’s Graduate Director, the Dean of the Graduate School, and the student. A second examination may be permitted if the student will be in good standing at the time of the proposed second examination. A second examination requires the approval of the program’s Graduate Director and the Dean of the Graduate School. If the student fails this second examination, or if a second examination is not permitted, the student’s admission to the graduate program is terminated.

The Decision to Accept the Examination as Satisfactory Must Be Unanimous. Students may present themselves for examination only twice. The report of the committee, signed by each member, must be submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School no later than the appropriate date listed in the Schedule of Classes if the student is to receive a diploma at the Commencement ceremony for the semester in which the examination is held.

Submission and Publication of the Thesis
Theses are to be submitted to the Graduate School in electronic format after final approval of the document by the Thesis Examining Committee. See the University of Maryland Thesis and Dissertation Style Guide (http://www.gradschool.umd.edu/current_students/etd_style_guide.html) for the details of this process.

Theses submitted to the University through the ETD process will also be deposited in the UM Library’s online electronic archive, DRUM (Digital Repository at the University of Maryland) (http://drum.lib.umd.edu). This is a free public archive of academic work by University faculty and graduate students. The submission of the thesis to the University in fulfillment of degree requirements grants the University the one-time, non-exclusive right to publish the document on DRUM.

The University’s Rights
The University of Maryland retains non-exclusive distribution, reproduction, and archival rights to doctoral dissertations submitted to the Graduate Faculty in fulfillment of requirements for a graduate degree. Such rights entitle the University of Maryland to reproduce, archive, and distribute dissertations, in whole or in part, in and from an electronic format, as it sees fit. Distribution is subject to a release date stipulated by the student and approved by the University.

The Student’s Rights and Responsibilities
As the owner of copyright in the thesis or dissertation, students have the exclusive right to reproduce, distribute, make derivative works based on, publicly perform and display their work, and to authorize others to exercise some or all of those rights. As a condition of graduation, each student’s thesis or dissertation must be published. When the student submits his or her work to the Graduate School, they will be given several options regarding access to their document via ProQuest’s Digital Dissertations and DRUM, the Digital Repository at the University of Maryland. The student’s options include:

Making the thesis or dissertation available via ProQuest and DRUM as soon as it is received

The abstract and full text of your work will be present in ProQuest’s Digital Dissertations for purchase, and will be both freely available and searchable online via DRUM.

Restricting online publication of the thesis or dissertation for either 1 or 6 years

Students may place an embargo (a restriction) on electronic access to your document through ProQuest’s Digital Dissertations and DRUM if there is legitimate reason to do so. Patents or future publication, for example, might be jeopardized by providing unrestricted access (see below). Should a student elect to restrict online publication of his or her work, a description of the research, including the student’s name, the document’s title, the advisor’s name, and the abstract will be available via ProQuest and DRUM, but the actual electronic file will be embargoed indefinitely. This option requires the written approval of the Dean of the Graduate School. This restriction can be lifted at the request of the author at a later date.

These choices only affect the electronic distribution of the thesis or dissertation document. A non-circulating copy of each University of Maryland thesis or dissertation will be available for consultation in Hornbake Library’s Maryland Room, and print copies of the document will be made available upon request to researchers through inter-library loan.

Inclusion of One’s Own Previously Published Materials in a Thesis or Dissertation

A graduate student may, upon the recommendation of the thesis director, and with the endorsement of the home graduate program Graduate Director, include his or her own published works as part of the final thesis. Appropriate citations within the thesis, including where the work was previously published, are required. All such materials must be produced in standard thesis format.

It is recognized that a graduate student may co-author work with faculty and colleagues that should be included in a thesis. In such an event, a letter should be sent to the Dean of the Graduate School certifying that the student’s Examining Committee has determined that the student made a substantial contribution to that work. This letter should also note that inclusion of the work has the approval of the thesis advisor and the Graduate Director. The format of such inclusions must conform to the standard thesis format. A foreword to the thesis, as approved by the Examining Committee, must state that the student made substantial
contributions to the relevant aspects of the jointly authored work included in the thesis.

Inclusion of Copyrighted Materials in a Thesis or Dissertation

Students are responsible for ensuring that their thesis or dissertation complies with copyright law. Copyright law gives the owner of a work exclusive rights to reproduce, distribute, display or perform the work publicly and to modify or adapt the work and the exclusive right to grant others permission to exercise any of those rights in the work, subject to certain exceptions. Students are responsible for determining if their use of another's work requires his or her permission or falls within one of the exceptions. Permission is not required to use a work when:

- The work never qualified for copyright because, for example, it lacked originality or was created by Federal employees in the scope of employment.
- Copyright in the work has expired.
- The use qualifies as a fair use.

Students should consult the following documents for guidance on complying with copyright law:

Did the work ever qualify for copyright protection?
- Library of Congress, Copyright Basics (http://www.copyright.gov/circs/circ01.pdf)
- Library of Congress, Blank Forms and Other Works Not Protected by Copyright (http://www.copyright.gov/circs/circ32.pdf)
- Library of Congress, Copyright Protection Not Available for Names, Titles, or Short Phrases (http://www.copyright.gov/circs/circ34.pdf)

Has copyright in the work expired?
- Library of Congress, Duration of Copyright (http://www.copyright.gov/circs/circ15a.pdf)
- Cornell University, Copyright Term and the Public Domain in the United States (http://copyright.cornell.edu/resources/publicdomain.cfm)

Is the proposed use a "fair use"?
- University of Washington Copyright Connection, Fair Use (http://depts.washington.edu/uwcopy/Copyright_Law/Fair_Use)

Non-Thesis Option

For programs offering a non-thesis option, please see the individual program's website.

Professional Master's Degrees

The University of Maryland offers a variety of Professional Master's Degree Programs geared towards working adults. For information about any one of the Professional Master's Program, please visit the graduate programs page (http://pdc-webapp-lamp27.umd.edu/Catalog/public-programs.php).