

# Master's Requirements (University)

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The purpose of this section is to provide an overview of Graduate Faculty Senate's policies for graduate education at MU. Students considering a master's degree should read all of the information below to fully understand the requirements of advanced study (e.g., residency, plan of study and time lines for completion) at MU.

MU confers a variety of master's, dual master's degrees (<https://gradschool.missouri.edu/current-students/dual-degree/>) or **dual master's/professional degrees** to students who satisfy the general requirements of the Graduate School and the specific requirements of the degree-granting department or area program. Designated **graduate minors** and **certificates** are available in some academic fields. **Thesis and non-thesis options** are available for select plans of study; students must consult with individual degree programs for more information.

## Master's Residency Requirements

The faculty of each graduate program determines its own residency requirements for master's degrees, subject to initial review by the Graduate Faculty Senate. Consult with the academic program for requirements. For academic programs that choose to maintain the traditional regulation concerning residency for master's students, the following applies: the student must complete a minimum of 24 semester hours of MU graduate courses which are taught by MU faculty and which are approved by the academic program and the Graduate School. Students who cannot fulfill residency requirements are encouraged to consider Missouri Online for available degrees.

## Graduation and Commencement Deadlines and Forms

It is recommended that students refer often to the Steps for Graduation and Commencement for Master's Students (<https://gradschool.missouri.edu/student-resources/policies/graduation-commencement/masters-commencement-steps/>) to avoid missing any important graduation or commencement deadlines. In addition to various deadlines, student must also submit a variety of necessary paperwork. By the end of the first year of master's work at MU, a student must begin submitting degree program forms, which will aid the department and the Graduate School in planning an academically appropriate course of study and in tracking the student's progress toward degree completion. These forms include the following:

**Program of Study.** Outlines the course work to be included in the student's degree program. This form should be submitted to the Graduate School by the end of the second semester unless the degree can be completed in two semester. In that case, the form is due by the end of the first semester. Plan of Study (M1) form (pdf) (<https://gradschool.missouri.edu/form/m1-program-of-study-for-the-masters-degree/>)

**Request for Thesis Committee** (thesis option only). Is a membership proposal for the student's thesis committee. This form should be submitted to the Graduate School at least one semester before the thesis defense is held. Request for Thesis Committee (M2) form (pdf) (<https://gradschool.missouri.edu/form/m2-request-for-thesis-committee/>).

**Report of Master's Examining Committee.** Reports the results of the thesis defense, master's comprehensive exam, project presentation, portfolio review, etc. Due to the Graduate School two weeks prior to graduation. Report of Master's Examining Committee (M3) form (pdf) (<https://gradschool.missouri.edu/form/m3-report-of-the-masters-examining-committee/>). (<https://gradschool.missouri.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/m3DigitalSignature-2.pdf>)

## Choosing an Advisor

Graduate Committee Membership for Jointly Appointed Faculty Chapter 320 of the Collected Rules and Regulations for the University of Missouri requires that all jointly appointed faculty members will have designated Primary Appointment and Primary Departments well as affiliation with one or more involved academic programs. These affiliations affect membership status of jointly appointed faculty on graduate student committees as follows:

- Faculty members may serve as advisor/committee chair when their Primary Appointment is in the graduate student's home academic program.
- When the graduate student's home academic program is the involved academic program for a jointly appointed faculty member, this person may serve as chair/advisor with the approval of the director of graduate studies from the student's home academic department.

## Graduate Committee Membership for Adjunct Faculty

Adjunct Faculty may serve as a Committee Chair or Committee Member only in academic programs in which they are appointed and approved for Graduate Faculty membership. Service on graduate committees outside the academic program in which they are appointed requires a recommendation by the director of graduate studies from the student's home academic program and approval by Dean of the Graduate School.

## Master's Plan of Study

The Graduate Faculty Senate has established a campus wide minimum of 30 hours of graduate credit beyond the bachelor's degree (or its equivalent) for a master's degree. Fifteen of the 30-hour minimum must be selected from courses numbered at 8000 or 9000 level. No more than 40 percent of the 30-hour credit requirement can be satisfied by a combination of special investigations, Research, Readings and/or Problems courses. Master's Plan of study. (<https://gradschool.missouri.edu/current-students/masters/>)

## Completing a Plan of Study Form

After performing satisfactorily for a minimum of one semester, the student, with the advisor's assistance, completes the Plan of Study form (pdf) (<https://gradschool.missouri.edu/form/m1-program-of-study-for-the-masters-degree/>) that outlines the plan of study for the student's graduate program. The form is forwarded through the academic program's director of graduate studies to the Graduate School for approval. The Plan of Study form must be filed with the Graduate School by the end of the student's second semester of enrollment or at least one semester prior to graduation. Upon approval of the program by the Graduate School, the student is a candidate for the degree. If a change is necessary to a student's approved Plan of Study form, a Plan of Study Substitution form (<https://gradschool.missouri.edu/form/plan-of-study-course-substitution-form/>) must be used.

**Note:** An academic program may have additional credit hour (or other) requirements. Check with the program of interest to confirm degree requirements.

## Transfer Credit Toward a Master's Degree

A maximum of 20 percent of the number of credit hours required for a student's degree may be graduate credits transferred from another university, including another campus of the University of Missouri system upon the recommendation of the advisor, the approval of the academic program director of graduate studies and the Graduate School.

### How to Request Transfer of Credit

1. The request or transfer credit must first be approved by the student's advisor and the department's director of graduate studies.
2. Once approved the student submits their Plan of Study or Course Substitution form to add the transfer work to the Plan of Study along with an unopened, official transfer transcript if one is not currently on file with the Graduate School.
3. Once the Graduate School has received the request it will be reviewed to determine if minimum requirements have been met.
4. If approved then the Graduate School will process the request so that the transfer credit appears on the MU student record.

### Minimum Transfer Requirements

Transfer course work:

- must be less than eight years old by the time the master's degree is conferred;
- was taken for graduate credit and clearly marked as such on the transfer transcript, complete with credit hours and a grade;
- is limited to no more than 20 percent of the total course work on the student's Plan of Study form;
- is from a regionally accredited institution in the U.S. or an overseas institution that is recognized by its country's Ministry of Education as a graduate degree granting institution.

### Credit Toward a Second Master's Degree

A student who has completed one master's degree at the University of Missouri or elsewhere may, upon recommendation of the advisor and approval by the academic program's director of graduate studies and the Graduate School, present a maximum of nine hours of credit earned in the previous program toward a second master's degree.

### Forming a Master's Thesis Committee

When a thesis is required for completion of a master's degree, the student is required to submit a Request for Thesis Committee (M2 form) (<https://gradschool.missouri.edu/form/m2-request-for-thesis-committee/>) or a dual-masters Request for Thesis Committee (DM2 form) (<https://gradschool.missouri.edu/form/dm2-request-for-dual-masters-degree-thesis-committees/>) for approval by the academic program's director of graduate studies and the Graduate School by the end of the student's second semester. A thesis committee is composed of three members of the MU faculty: a major advisor from the academic program, a second reader from the academic program and either a third reader from the academic program or an outside reader who is a member of the graduate faculty from a different MU graduate program.

After the Request for Thesis Committee form has been filed, any changes must be submitted through the Change of Committee form (<https://gradschool.missouri.edu/form/change-of-committee-form/>).

## Approval of a Non-MU Faculty Member

Upon approval of the academic program's director of graduate studies, the student may petition the Graduate School to allow a person who is not a member of the MU graduate faculty to serve as the third reader. The petition should include a written justification for such a request and a copy of the person's curriculum vitae. If approved, the third reader will receive Graduate Faculty Status C (<https://gradschool.missouri.edu/faculty-staff/graduate-faculty-senate/membership/>). The Graduate School maintains a database of all faculty with graduate status; the student should contact the Graduate School to see if the intended third reader holds graduate faculty status.

## The Thesis Process

If a thesis is required, it must be the student's own work and must demonstrate a capacity for research and independent thought. A student writing a thesis should refer to the Graduate School's thesis and dissertation guidelines (<https://gradschool.missouri.edu/academics/thesis-dissertation/>). Academic programs may have additional requirements. The Graduate School sets deadlines for master's students (<https://gradschool.missouri.edu/student-resources/policies/graduation-commencement/>) for completion and submission of the thesis.

## Thesis Acceptance

A thesis must be approved by the major advisor, a second reader from the academic program and third reader who may be from the academic program or another member of the graduate faculty. Students need to supply committee members with copies for review/evaluation. After successfully defending the thesis, the student will make any needed adjustments in format and corrections, based on input from the committee. The thesis is then submitted electronically as a PDF file or on a CD.

Review the Graduate School web pages for additional information on the master's thesis process (<https://gradschool.missouri.edu/academics/thesis-dissertation/thesis-process/>).

A searchable thesis and dissertation archive is maintained by the MU Libraries.

## Grades at the Graduate Level-Graduation Requirement

To become eligible for a master's degree, a student must have completed all MU graduate work attempted with a GPA of 3.0 (A=4.0) or higher. Review grading policies (<https://catalog.missouri.edu/academicpolicies/gradesandcreditsg/>) for more information.

## Examination Process

### Thesis Option

Where a thesis is presented in partial fulfillment of graduation requirements, students must form a thesis committee. In the final semester, the student must successfully present (defend) the thesis. Three members of the student's committee must sign the Report of the Master's Degree Examining Committee (pdf) (<https://gradschool.missouri.edu/form/m3-report-of-the-masters-examining-committee/>), which is then forwarded through the academic program's director of graduate studies to the Graduate School by the semester deadline.

## Non-Thesis Option

Where no thesis is presented by the candidate, a final examination committee, composed of three members from the academic program, is designated by the academic program's director of graduate studies with the approval of the Graduate School. During the final semester, the Report of the Master's Examining Committee (pdf) (<https://gradschool.missouri.edu/form/m3-report-of-the-masters-examining-committee/>), signed by the director of graduate studies, is forwarded to the Graduate School by the semester deadline. All candidates for the MA or MS degrees must complete either a thesis or a substantial independent project that cannot be coauthored.

## Enrollment at the Master's Level

For general master's enrollment requirements go to the Graduate School's web page on master's enrollment requirements (<https://gradschool.missouri.edu/current-students/masters/>).

## Enrollment

The master's candidate must be enrolled at the University during the semester or session in which a thesis is defended, a master's project is presented, or the completion of a master's comprehensive exam is certified. Students who do not wish to enroll in course work during this time can enroll in "Graduate Examination" hours only.

**Note:** Registration in the "Graduate Examination" does not count toward enrollment certification. Students enrolled in the "Graduate Examination" are not considered full-time or part-time. Students who enroll in the Graduate Examination will no longer have a valid student ID; they will not have regular access to the Student Health Center, MU Libraries, the Student Recreation Center, or campus computing centers. If a student needs to use any of these services, registration in a one-, two-, or three-hour course (including graduate research courses) is required. Extra fees apply for access to these services.

Graduate students must be enrolled in at least 9 credit hours to be considered full-time students and at least 4.5 credit hours to be considered half-time students during fall and spring terms. For summer terms, graduate students must be enrolled in 4.5 hours to be considered full-time and 2.25 to be considered half-time students.

Students with financial aid or a visa should discuss plans with the Student Financial Aid (<https://financialaid.missouri.edu/>) office before registering for Graduate Examination hours. International students with a visa should discuss plans with MU's International Center (<https://international.missouri.edu/>) before registering for the Graduate Examination. Failure to do so could result in serious consequences for a student's financial aid or visa status.

## Scheduling Exams and Defenses

Comprehensive exams, thesis defenses, portfolio presentations, and other capstone activities must be conducted during the regular semester session. Dates that are excluded from graduation examinations include breaks between semester sessions, national holidays where the University is not in operation, and weekends.

## Time Limit for Master's Degree Completion

The program for the master's degree must be completed within a period of eight years beginning with the first semester of enrollment in which the student is accepted to a degree program or from the date of the oldest coursework used on the plan of study. Individual academic programs may

stipulate a shorter time period. Time spent in the armed services will not count toward the eight year limit (see also Active Duty Policy). For any extension of this time limitation, the student must petition the Graduate School by submitting a request to their advisor who, in turn, submits a written request to the Graduate School that is endorsed by the academic program's director of graduate studies. The Graduate School will notify the advisor and director of graduate studies of the final decision via email.

For academic advice or assistance with degree program planning, students should contact their advisors. See master's graduation requirements. (<https://gradschool.missouri.edu/student-resources/policies/graduation-commencement/masters-commencement-steps/>)

## Reasonable Rate of Progress for Master's Students

Reasonable rate of progress is governed by both the campus-wide policies of the Graduate Faculty Senate as well as academic program regulations, which may be more restrictive. Failure to satisfy the Graduate Faculty Senate's rate of progress policies, which leads to dismissal, is handled through the Request for Extension (<https://gradschool.missouri.edu/policy/requests-for-extension-and-appeals-in-graduate-student-progress/>) process.

## Deadline for Submission of Thesis After Successful Defense

After successful defense of the thesis, students must comply with their academic program's enrollment requirements. International students should also consult the International Center so that they comply with visa requirements. Students are required to submit their final thesis by the end of the following semester after a successful defense unless a letter asking for an extension is submitted to the dean of the Graduate School by the student's advisor and program's director of graduate studies.

## Extension Requests for Master's Students

If extenuating circumstances inhibit a student's rate of progress, the student must follow the Request for Extension (<https://gradschool.missouri.edu/policy/requests-for-extension-and-appeals-in-graduate-student-progress/>) process. To do so, the student petitions the Graduate School by submitting a request to their advisor who, in turn, submits a written request to the Graduate School that is endorsed by the academic program's director of graduate studies.

## Dismissal

Dismissals arising from violation of academic program policies may be appealed using the Appeals Process. For additional details, graduate students should refer to the Dismissal Policy (<https://gradschool.missouri.edu/policy/probation-termination-and-appeals/>) and the Extension Requests and Appeals Process (<https://gradschool.missouri.edu/policy/requests-for-extension-and-appeals-in-graduate-student-progress/>).

## Dual Degrees: Master's Students

As the US workforce becomes increasingly interdisciplinary, some master's students elect to concurrently pursue two advanced study degrees. All dual-degree programs at the graduate level require Graduate Faculty Senate approval. Please refer to the A-Z list of graduate degree programs (<https://gradschool.missouri.edu/degree-programs/>) to learn what is currently available.

The two types of dual master's degrees are the dual master's degree and the dual master's-professional degree.

Degree Type	Dual Master's Degree	Dual Master's-Professional Degree
Description	This is a cooperative degree, arranged between two graduate degree granting programs and approved by the Graduate Faculty Senate.	This is a cooperative degree arranged between a graduate degree granting program and a professional degree granting program (e.g., law or medicine) and approved by the Graduate Faculty Senate.
Application Processes	Students must simultaneously submit a separate application to both degree programs to be considered for admittance. Because some students may not be aware of an approved dual-degree program before their arrival at MU, the option to participate in an approved dual-degree program may be postponed until no later than the end of a student's second semester at MU. Start your online application process at <a href="https://gradschool.missouri.edu/admissions">https://gradschool.missouri.edu/admissions</a> ( <a href="https://gradschool.missouri.edu/admissions/">https://gradschool.missouri.edu/admissions/</a> )	The Graduate School oversees the master's degree portion of the dual master's/professional degree. Students must apply to both the Graduate School and the professional program, notifying both of their interest in the dual program. Start your online application process to the Graduate School at <a href="https://gradschool.missouri.edu/admissions">https://gradschool.missouri.edu/admissions</a> ( <a href="https://gradschool.missouri.edu/admissions/">https://gradschool.missouri.edu/admissions/</a> )
Forms and Policies	Students must fill out an Application for Dual Enrollment (pdf) no later than the end of a student's second semester at MU.	For Graduate School policies and forms pertaining to the master's portion of the dual master's/professional degree, refer to the Master's Degrees Requirements and Policies on the website.

### Note on Dual Degrees for Law Students

Dual-degree programs with the Law School enable students to earn the Juris Doctor (JD) concurrently with a Master's or PhD degree. Dual-degree students must fulfill entrance requirements for both schools, including any entrance exam (if required) and the LSAT. Contact the Law School (<https://law.missouri.edu/>) for more information on their dual-degree programs.

### Note on Dual Degrees for Medical Students

Additional information concerning medical dual degrees for both master's and doctoral students can be found on the doctoral dual degree (<https://gradschool.missouri.edu/current-students/dual-degree/>) page.

### Counting Credits

A student must complete a minimum of 18 hours of graduate courses for each degree program respectively. A minimum of 3 hours must be 8000-level courses. Additionally, the student must complete 12 hours of shared 8000-level graduate credit, which can include thesis/project research credit, as applicable.

Thus, 18 + 18 + 12 = 48 hours of graduate credit which is the minimum total hours for a dual master's degree program.

For example, for a dual master's degree program in Applied Mathematics and Electrical Engineering, a student's plan of study must show 18 hours of Applied Mathematics graduate course work that applies only to the Applied Mathematics degree and 18 hours of Electrical Engineering graduate course work that applies only to the Electrical Engineering degree. The additional 12 hours of shared 8000-level graduate credit brings the total earned graduate credit hours to 48.

### Transfer Credit

Up to eight hours of transfer credit may be applied as follows: to one of the two degree programs, or divided between the two degree programs. The eight hours of transfer credit cannot be applied to each degree program separately.

### Advising & Committees

There will be a separate advisor and committee for each degree program.

*Dean's Note:* the option of a combined committee structure may be included in proposals for Graduate Faculty Senate consideration, e.g., co-advisors who would also serve as outside members, plus one additional member from each degree program, for a total of four committee members.

### Dual Degree Progress Forms

Special dual master's degree program forms will be used to certify plans of study, committee members and final defense/examinations. The forms are available from the Master's Steps for Graduation and Commencement (<https://gradschool.missouri.edu/student-resources/policies/graduation-commencement/masters-commencement-steps/>).

### Conferral of Dual Degrees

The University will confer two separate diplomas upon completion of all degree requirements for both programs.