

Master's Degree Policies

Degrees Offered

Master of Arts (M.A.)/Master of Science (M.S.)

North Dakota State University offers master's degrees in three categories. A program need not offer all three types of master's degrees. The types of degrees offered should be justified based on relevant criteria such as pedagogy or principles appropriate to the field. Programs wishing to grant a Master of Science degree or a Master of Arts degree typically need to satisfy the requirements of either the Plan A or the Plan B option. Candidates for the Master of Arts degree will meet the general requirements and those specific requirements in the humanities or social and behavioral science; these typically include two years of a foreign language.

The Plan C degree is primarily intended for professional degree programs. In addition, the three plans differ in the composition of the student's supervisory committee and required submissions to the Graduate School upon degree completion.

Plan A: Thesis-based Master's

The thesis would typically include a problem statement, a review of existing literature relevant to that problem, and the creation and presentation of new knowledge in providing a solution to the problem. Each student would assemble a supervisory committee as described on the next tab. Each candidate is required to pass a final oral examination in which the supervisory committee serves as the examining committee. Following a successful defense, the candidate will submit an electronic copy of their thesis to the Graduate School for review.

Plan B: Master's Paper/Comprehensive Study-based Master's

The Plan B master's student will develop a thorough understanding of existing knowledge and the ability to apply that existing knowledge to a problem of interest. Note that under this degree, the new knowledge being created is limited, and this is the primary difference between the Plan A and Plan B degrees. The precise nature of the individual creative component is defined by the program. Examples of possible creative components include a comprehensive paper, a portfolio, or an integrated field experience. Candidates for the Master of Arts degree will meet the general requirements and those specific requirements in the humanities or social and behavioral sciences; these typically include two years of a foreign language.

Each candidate would assemble a supervisory committee and pass a final oral examination. Following a successful defense, the candidate will compose an executive summary or assemble other appropriate documentation as defined by the program to be submitted to the Graduate School. This submission to the Graduate College is to be approved by the student's supervisory committee.

Plan C: Culminating Experience-based Master's

Plan C is designed for programs in which a well-defined culminating experience is more important than is an individual creative component. This degree will most frequently be available in professional degree programs. Each program will define a culminating experience such as a capstone course, a written examination, or some other approach to measure the candidate's understanding of the relevant material in the area. The student's supervisory committee would generally consist of faculty solely from within that discipline. The supervisory committee may specify that a certain level of performance (i.e., a minimum GPA) be obtained in specified courses or in the program itself.

Upon completion of the appropriate course work and culminating experience, the candidate must submit to the Graduate School examination documentation (if required by program) and an Application for Graduate Degree.

Professional/Non-Thesis Degree Programs

Master of Accountancy (M.Acc.)

The Master of Accountancy (M.Acc.) program at North Dakota State University is a non-thesis, professional program structured to advance the knowledge of qualified students with an undergraduate accounting degree. The program is designed to have students complete graduate studies needed to advance their careers whether their career be in public accounting, corporate accounting, or government accounting and prepare them for the Certified Public Accountant (CPA) exam.

Master of Athletic Training (M.A.Trg.)

The Master of Athletic Training is a professional program that is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE). The M.A.Trg. will prepare students to take the Board of Certification, Inc. (BOC) examination and earn the 'ATC' credential. Didactic courses and clinical experience courses focus on prevention, assessment, treatment and rehabilitation of injuries resulting from physical activity.

Master of Business Administration (M.B.A.)

The Master of Business Administration degree is a non-disquisition, professional degree program structured to serve qualified students with any undergraduate degree. The program has two general parts: a foundation course requirement involving up to 30 semester credits and an M.B.A. (common body of knowledge) graduate course requirement of 30 semester credit hours.

Master of Construction Management (M.C.M.)

The Master of Construction Management is an online professional program consisting of 30 credits of course work and the Associate Constructor (AC) Exam. The Master of Construction Management is administered through Distance and Continuing Education (DCE) (<https://www.ndsu.edu/dce>) at NDSU.

Master of Education (M.Ed.)

The Master of Education degree is a non-disquisition, practitioner-oriented degree for teachers and school counselors. Candidates for this degree will meet the general requirements as well as specific requirements established by the School of Education.

Master of Engineering (M.Engr.)

The Master of Engineering in Electrical and Computer Engineering is a course work only program requiring a capstone consisting of a portfolio or written exam. Faculty are experienced researchers in the following areas: Signal Processing Group, Biomedical Engineering, Power/Power Electronics, Integrated Circuit, Electromagnetics, and Computer Engineering. The Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering is also a key contributor to NDSU's Research and Technology Park.

Master of Managerial Logistics (M.M.L.)

The Master of Managerial Logistics is a 36 graduate credit professional degree program targeted specifically at career military officers, Department of Defense civilians, and other logistic professionals.

Master of Music (M.M.)

The Master of Music in performance and conducting is the professional degree in music designed for performers and conductors wishing to augment and refine their skills. The M.M. in Music Education is designed for music teachers who wish to update and increase their practical pedagogical knowledge.

Master of Natural Resources Management (M.N.R.M.)

The Master of Natural Resources Management degree is designed as a professional, non-thesis degree program specifically designed for students holding a Bachelor of Science degree in Natural Resources Management or a closely related field who are seeking an educational opportunity for advanced course work culminating in a professional terminal degree.

Master of Public Health (M.P.H.)

Public health is defined as the practice of helping members of society live healthier, longer lives. More specifically, public health focuses on improving the general health of communities through efforts to monitor the spread of diseases, initiatives (both clinical and policy-oriented) to prevent disease and disability, and by promoting healthy lifestyles through education and community engagement. NDSU offers the M.P.H. degree with specializations in American Indian public health, health promotion, management of infectious disease, and public health in clinical systems.

Master of Software Engineering (M.S.E.)

The Master of Software Engineering degree is a non-thesis, professional degree program for students who want to update or upgrade their credentials in software engineering. The M.S.E. program teaches current skills and knowledge in software engineering, and is offered through on-campus courses or through Distance and Continuing Education.

Master of Transportation and Urban Systems (M.T.U.S.)

The Master of Transportation and Urban Systems is a non-disquisition degree that is primarily intended for professional planners and engineers. Students in the M.S. and M.T.U.S. programs can select from a common set of courses. However, students enrolled in the non-disquisition (M.T.U.S.) program have more opportunities for synthesis of practice and additional course work, with less emphasis on research.

Education Specialist (Ed.S.) in Educational Administration

In addition to offering several Master of Education (M.Ed.) programs preparing candidates for administration credentials in North Dakota, the Educational Leadership program prepares students for Master of Science (M.S.) and Education Specialist (Ed.S.) degrees in Educational Administration. Programs meet certification requirements in the various areas appropriate to elementary and secondary administration.

Supervisory Committee

The supervisory committee should be formed during the term immediately after the major adviser is identified for the student, and members should be identified before the plan of study is formulated so that all committee members have a chance to contribute to the Plan of Study. The supervisory committee agreed upon by the major adviser and student, and approved by the program administrator and the academic dean shall be recommended to the Dean of the Graduate College for final approval.

The supervisory committee will have at least three members. The members consist of:

1. The major adviser, who must be a full or affiliate member of the graduate faculty Level 1 or 2. The student selects the adviser with approval of the program administrator and the Dean of the Graduate College. The major adviser-student relationship must be a mutually acceptable one. The major adviser will act as the chair of the student's supervisory committee and will be in charge of the Plan of Study. The remaining members of the committee must be agreed upon by the student, the major adviser, and the Dean of the Graduate College.
2. A second member, who must be a full or affiliate member of the graduate faculty.
3. A third member, who could be either a faculty member from outside the student's program or a qualified off-campus expert in the field. If this committee member is not a full or affiliate member of the graduate faculty, the approval of the Dean of the Graduate College is required. Approval by the dean requires a memo from the program/department chair explaining the qualifications of the person to be on the committee and the person's curriculum vitae.

Plan of Study

The Plan of Study shall include the specific courses the student is expected to complete and any other special requirements of the particular master's degree that the student is seeking. A student must be in good academic standing to submit a Plan of Study. The Plan of Study should be submitted to the Graduate College for approval no later than the term immediately after the supervisory committee is formed and must be filed in the Graduate School prior to scheduling the final examination. Revisions may be made, with the Request for Change form, later as advisable and necessary, but must be approved by the student, adviser, the administrator of the student's program, and the graduate dean.

Each program has the responsibility of defining the requirements for a major in its disciplinary area. This information should be made available to students electronically and/or in the program handbook.

Didactic, Greek for "to teach", credits are courses numbered 601-689, 691; 700-789, 791; 800-889 and 891.

Plan A Master's Degree

- Minimum 30 credits total
- 16 of the 30 must be didactic credits
- 6-10 credits of research (798 Master's Thesis)

Plan B Master's Degree

- Minimum 30 credits total
- 21 of the 30 must be didactic credits
- 2-4 credits of research (797 Master's Paper)

Once these minimum requirements have been met, any other graduate courses can be used to satisfy the remaining Plan of Study requirements. The various programs determine which approved graduate courses may be used. For specific requirements, the student should consult the programs.

A student may use up to 10 credits taken as a non-degree NDSU graduate student toward the degree..

Transfer of Credit

All graduate credits used to meet the requirements of a master's degree must be approved by the supervisory committee, the program administrator, and the Dean of the Graduate College. A candidate for the master's degree must petition in order to transfer up to a maximum of 10 semester hours of graduate credit from another institution to satisfy course requirements on the Plan of Study. Credits are transferred at the time the Plan of Study is approved.

Transfer credits

1. College-level course work from regionally accredited colleges or universities (or equivalent for international institutions) is eligible for acceptance in transfer (credits from international institutions can be transferred only if approved by a committee from the student's program);
2. must carry only grades of A or B on a 4.0 scale;
3. must have been earned within a 7-year period at the time of the final examination;
4. must be graduate level;

5. must not be a continuing education, correspondence, extension, or workshop course;
6. must not be internship, individual study, special problem, or research (disquisition) courses, or courses graded Pass/Fail or Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory;
7. must not have been used to fulfill the requirements of a baccalaureate degree;
8. must be verified by an official transcript; and
9. will not be used in calculation of the grade point average.

It is the responsibility of the student to provide official transcripts of graduate courses taken elsewhere to the Graduate College.

NOTE: The Special Problem credits of item (6) above are equivalent to North Dakota State University's 696/796 Special Topic credits.

Time Limitation

Graduate credit for any course work that is more than seven (7) calendar years old at the time of the final examination cannot be used to satisfy degree requirements. The final examination is valid for one year. Should a student not have his/her disquisition approved by the Graduate College or fail to meet other degree requirements, the final examination must be retaken.

If a period of time two years or greater lapses before the disquisition is approved by the Graduate School, the student must reapply, re-defend the thesis and must register for a minimum of two (2) credits. The student's degree will post at the end of the semester in which the disquisition is approved by the Graduate School.

Multiple Graduate Degrees

On occasion, a student may be allowed to work at satisfying the requirements of two graduate degrees concurrently. In completing all program and Graduate College requirements for two degrees, a maximum of nine (9) graduate credits of course work can be applied to both programs of study as approved by all members of both supervisory committees, the two program administrators, the academic dean(s), and the Dean of the Graduate College. *A student pursuing multiple graduate degrees must maintain continuous enrollment in each program.*

The disquisitions must differ substantially and must result from substantial work completed independently in each discipline. There are two final examinations. The appropriate time limitation applies to all course work.

Master's Degree with Two Major Areas

Under special circumstances, a student may pursue one master's degree with two major areas. Such a program must have the concurrent recommendation of the administrators of the two programs. The Plan of Study shall clearly delineate the course work required for each major area. A minimum of 40 credit hours is required, including at least 14 graduate course credits in each of the two major areas. No more than 10 of the required 40 credits shall be research credits under the Plan A master's, while no more than three of the required 40 credits shall be paper credits under the Plan B master's. The student is required to conduct interdisciplinary scholarly work culminating in a disquisition acceptable in both major areas.

Final Examination (Plan A and B)

The candidate shall pass a final examination (either oral or written as specified for the degree) before being awarded the master's degree. The supervisory committee shall serve as the examining committee of which the major adviser shall serve as chair.

The final examination shall cover the course work taken by the candidate and also the disquisition, seminar papers, or oral examination paper and fundamental knowledge. Once a date is finalized with the student's supervisory committee, the Notification of Scheduled Examination (https://www.ndsu.edu/fileadmin/gradschool.ndsu.edu/Forms/Student_Forms/Request_to_Schedule.pdf) form must be filed with the Graduate College at least two (2) weeks prior to the examination.

The disquisition in a near final form must be given to the committee members no fewer than seven (7) days prior to the examination. If this seven 7-day stipulation cannot be met, the student must either secure the concurrence of all committee members or reschedule the examination. At the conclusion of the examination, the examining committee shall record, in writing, approval or disapproval. The Report of Final Exam (http://www.ndsu.edu/fileadmin/gradschool.ndsu.edu/Forms/Student_Forms/Report_of_Final_Examination.pdf) must be filed with the Graduate College within seven (7) days of the exam.

A negative vote by more than one member of the student's committee will signify failure of the final examination. The student may repeat the examination only upon permission from a majority of the supervisory committee. The committee will set a date at least one month after the failed examination. Exceptions to this time limit will be considered by the graduate dean upon presentation of written justification from the chair of the committee in consultation with the committee.

Should the examination be failed twice, the student will not be given a third examination except by recommendation of the examining committee, program administrator, and special approval of the Dean of the Graduate College following consultation with the Graduate Council.

Continuous enrollment is required (fall and spring semester) until all degree requirements are completed, including Graduate School approval of the thesis or paper. Students defending in the summer semester must register for summer semester. To participate in commencement, the student must have passed the final examination seven (7) days prior to the commencement ceremony.

IRB, IBC, and/or IACUC Approval

If a proposed graduate research project involves human, animal, or biohazard subjects, it must be submitted for review and approval by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), and/or the Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC). This process should be initiated by the student after his or her supervisory committee has approved the final research design, because IRB, IBC, and/or IACUC approval must be obtained **before** the research project commences and cannot be granted retroactively. A copy of the appropriate approval letters is required when the dissertation is submitted for editing.

Disquisitions that involve research using humans or animals as subjects or using biohazard materials will not be approved by the Graduate College if such research has not been previously approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), or Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) as appropriate. Every effort should be made by advisers to see that students are aware of these University requirements.

Filing the Thesis or Paper

After the final examination, the student incorporates all revisions into the disquisition as required by the supervisory committee. Once the corrections are made, students must submit the following items to the Graduate School:

- signed approval page
- IRB/IACUC/IBC Compliance Notification
- disquisition
- disquisition processing fee

The student will have **one (1) year from the date of the final examination** to complete the Graduate School disquisition review process and all other degree requirements. Should the disquisition not receive final approval or any other degree requirements not be completed within this time limit, the student must repeat the final examination. If a period of time two (2) years or greater lapses before the final copy is submitted, the student must reapply to the Graduate College, retake the final examination, register for a minimum of two (2) credits and request an extension.

A degree posts at the end of the semester in which the disquisition is approved and other degree requirements are completed.

Plan of Study

Students in Plan C (professional programs) must submit a Plan of Study (https://www.ndsu.edu/gradschool/current_students/forms/#c225106) by the end of their second semester of course work. Some programs have set curriculum and their own Plan of Study. The chair of the student's supervisory committee/adviser must be a full or affiliate member of the graduate faculty.

Master's course work is valid for seven (7) calendar years after a student matriculates. A leave of absence does not change this 7-year time limit.

Degree Completion

Students in programs not requiring a thesis or paper must complete the Graduation Application (https://www.ndsu.edu/gradschool/graduating_students/non_thesis_masters_programs/#c294203) form and submit it to the Graduate College the semester in which the degree will be completed. There is a \$25 processing fee that may be paid online. No transcript or diploma will be issued until this fee is paid.