The Master's Degree Program

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The minimum requirements for most master’s degrees can be satisfied in one academic year of two semesters or nine months. In practice, however, many students need three semesters or longer. Certain departments have special requirements as outlined in this Bulletin. In addition, those students who hold assistantships or fellowships, those who engage in time-consuming work off-campus, or those with scholastic deficiencies of any sort cannot meet all requirements in the minimum time. Also, research is unpredictable and frequently requires more time than anticipated. Certain departments offer a master’s degree under two plans, referred to as the Thesis Option and the Non-Thesis Option.

Summary of Procedures for Master’s Degree Program

The student should:

1. Obtain application forms from the Graduate School and apply for admission by submitting completed forms and other required materials as outlined in this Bulletin.
2. Apply for an assistantship, if pertinent, with the department involved.
3. Become familiar with requirements for the desired degree as outlined in this Bulletin.
4. Consult with departmental advisor and become oriented to departmental procedures.
5. Plan schedule of study for the first semester with advisor.
6. Establish an advisory committee through the department head or chair and departmental advisor; usually done during the first semester of course work.
7. Prepare a proposed Plan of Study in consultation with the advisory committee. Submit a plan approved by the committee and department head to the Graduate School at least one term prior to the term in which the student plans to graduate.
8. Consult with the advisor on approval for the thesis plan, if pertinent, and become familiar with the Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Guide, on the Web (www.grad.auburn.edu/etd_guide.html).
9. Fulfill language requirements, if any.
10. Request graduation check in the Graduate School no later than the last day of the semester (graduation day) prior to the semester of graduation.
11. Register for at least one course the semester of graduation.
12. Prepare thesis manuscript, if pertinent.
13. Arrange for final oral examination with advisory committee.

Advisory Committee

The student works under the direction of an advisory committee composed of three members recommended by the appropriate department/program head or chair. Two must be members of the graduate faculty. The committee chair (or one of the co-chairs) must be a graduate faculty member in the department/program granting the degree. This committee will approve the student’s program of study, conduct required examinations and direct the required field project or thesis. Students in a teaching field (e.g., music education, science education, foreign language education) work under a committee composed of at least two members from the College of Education and one member from a related academic field.
Plan of Study

Early in the graduate program, each student should confer with the appropriate departmental advisor or major professor to select courses and discuss research interests. Then a Plan of Study should be prepared and submitted to the Graduate School. The Plan of Study form is available on the Web at www.grad.auburn.edu. The Plan of Study must be submitted at least one term prior to the term in which the student plans to graduate. No student will be permitted to graduate who fails to submit a Plan of Study. Notification of all changes must be provided before the beginning of the final semester. One to three changes may be made by using the simplified “Change in Existing Plan of Study Form” available at the Graduate School or on the Web. Four or more changes require a new Plan of Study. The student is responsible for carrying out the planned program and for asking the major professor to make necessary changes.

Time Limit

All graduate work toward a master’s degree must be completed within a period of six calendar years. The student’s time to completion begins with the earliest completed course approved for inclusion in the Plan of Study.

Language Requirement

Some departments require a reading knowledge of one foreign language. These requirements are outlined in the departmental statements later in this section. Arrangements to take the foreign language examination should be made with the student’s major professor and the head or chair of the department. The student must apply at the Graduate School by the deadline for each semester listed in the calendar.

Master’s Degree Options

The following general regulations are minimum requirements. The professor or committee in charge of a student’s work may require more than the specified minimum in order to achieve a well-rounded program. All programs require a minimum of 30 semester hours of graduate courses, 6000-level or above.

The Thesis Option

The master of arts, master of science and master of industrial design are offered under the thesis option. Thesis students register for 7990 Research and Thesis in semesters when working on the thesis, when submitting, defending or awaiting final approval of the thesis, and when taking final examinations.

Major and minor subjects

A student under the thesis option must earn a minimum of 30 semester hours, of which at least 21 semester hours must be in a major area of concentration. Depending on departmental requirements or the wishes of the student’s advisory committee, the remainder of the course work may be taken within the major field or in a separate but closely related area. Specific requirements are set forth in this Bulletin.

If a student has not met all undergraduate pre-requisites in any field chosen for major or minor work, these should be scheduled as soon as possible, preferably before graduate work begins. The major professor will indicate these on the student’s Plan of Study.

The topic selected for the thesis must be approved by the student’s major professor and advisory committee. The student conducts the research and prepares the thesis under the direction of the major professor. The course, Research and Thesis, is number 7990 in all departments. The student must register for a minimum of four credit hours of this course but may register for as many hours as desired. No more than six hours may be counted toward meeting degree requirements. The student may register for one or more hours at a time. No grade is assigned for this course.

The Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Guide, which contains information about requirements for the thesis, is available on the Web at www.grad.auburn.edu/etd_guide.html. Submission of a thesis is defined as the time at which the first complete draft of such is submitted to the major professor for review. The Graduate School accepts only theses prepared according to the Guide. Refer to the Approval Process section in the Guide to have a final format check done. The Graduate School Calendar lists the deadline for acceptance of final approved theses by the Graduate School each semester. If the electronic thesis needs corrections, the student’s graduation may be delayed at least one semester. Auburn University reserves the right to make copies of the thesis, but the student retains all publication rights. Effective Summer 2005, all theses must be published electronically through AUETD.

At the discretion of the program, students may be required to pass a comprehensive examination independent of the required thesis defense. If a program requires a comprehensive examination, the program will publish and submit to the Graduate School a description of the scope and form of the assessment (e.g., comprehensive oral or written examination) and the process for appeal or re-examination should the student fail the examination.
The major professor will schedule the thesis defense not later than the deadline indicated in the Graduate School calendar. The thesis defense should be open to members of the Graduate Faculty as visitors. Successful completion of the thesis defense requires the unanimous support of all members of the advisory committee. If a student fails the thesis defense, one re-examination may be given on recommendation of the advisory committee and approval by the dean of the Graduate School. Further examinations will be allowed only under exceptional circumstances and with approval of the Graduate Council.

The Non-Thesis Option

At the discretion of the program, students may be required to pass a comprehensive examination. If a program requires a comprehensive examination, the program will publish and submit to the Graduate School a description of the scope and form of the assessment (e.g., comprehensive oral or written examination) and the process for appeal or re-examination should the student fail the examination. Non-thesis graduate students who complete a special project must register for 7980 in semesters when working on the project. Non-thesis students requiring only a final examination register for GRAD7000 in the semester when the exam is taken. Credit hours for 7990 Research and Thesis cannot be counted toward graduation requirements for non-thesis degree programs.

The Master of Arts

The master of arts is offered in communication (thesis and non-thesis option), English (thesis and non-thesis option), history (thesis and non-thesis option), sociology (thesis and non-thesis option) and Spanish.

The Master of Science


Second Master’s Degree

For a second master’s degree, the student fulfills all major requirements applicable to any other master’s degree, including the thesis, if appropriate. The student may, on recommendation of the advisory committee, transfer credit hours from the previous master’s degree. The student must earn at least 24 semester hours, or half of the total hours required for the master’s degree, whichever is greater, in the second master’s program at Auburn University.

Special or Professional Master’s Degrees

These special or professional degrees are offered: master of accountancy, master of aerospace engineering, master of agriculture (agricultural economics, agronomy and soils, animal sciences, entomology, horticulture, plant pathology, and poultry science), master of applied mathematics, master of aquaculture, master of building construction, master of business administration, master of chemical engineering, master of civil engineering, master of communication disorders, master of community planning, master of design build, master of software engineering, master of education (curriculum and teaching, educational foundations leadership and technology, health and human performance, and special education, rehabilitation, and counseling school psychology), master of electrical engineering, master of forestry, master of Hispanic studies, master of industrial design (thesis and non-thesis option), master of industrial and systems engineering, master of landscape architecture, master of management information systems, master of materials engineering, master of mechanical engineering, master of probability and statistics, master of public administration, master of technical and professional communication, and master of biological studies.