

## **Requirements for the Master's Degree**

### **Amount and Distribution of Work**

A minimum of 30 semester credits is required for the master's degree. Most master's degrees require at least 15 credits in courses numbered 500 or above, including thesis credit for master's programs involving a thesis. Master's programs involving a thesis include no more than six and no fewer than four credits of thesis. (See the section on "Thesis" for further guidelines.)

At least 15 credits for the master's degree must be for work in courses in the department in which the student was admitted. Additional credits may be selected from other fields to fit into a logical, justifiable program. Courses used to remove deficiencies or satisfy prerequisites cannot be counted as part of the requirements for the master's degree.

Students must take coursework from a variety of faculty. Students may not take more than half of the minimum credits required for a master's degree (excluding thesis credits) with the same professor.

Short courses of less than one summer session or one semester duration cannot constitute more than one-fourth of the total course requirements for a master's degree.

### **Program of Study**

It is recommended that, during the first semester of enrollment, each graduate student beginning studies toward a degree prepare a complete tentative program of study in consultation with the student's adviser. This tentative program should be kept in the student's file within the department and is not to be considered as the "Application for Admission to Candidacy," which contains the permanent program.

### **Application to Candidacy**

The admission of a student to the Graduate School does not imply admission to candidacy for an advanced degree. The major department in which the student intends to become a candidate for a master's degree must be satisfied as to the student's sound basic training and the ability to pursue studies at the graduate level. Departments may require a comprehensive qualifying examination before officially approving any candidate for the master's degree.

**An "Application for Admission to Candidacy," which formally lists curriculum requirements for the student's program of studies, must be filed with the Graduate School no later than after the completion of 12 credits of graduate work.**

At the time the "Application for Admission to Candidacy" is submitted, the student must have a cumulative graduate grade-point average of 3.0. The application may specify the Graduate Catalog in effect at the time of matriculation, provided that the catalog is not more than seven years old. Otherwise, the current Graduate Catalog will be used. The student's program listed in the "Application for Admission to Candidacy" must (1) meet the requirements of the chosen catalog, including the regulations of the Graduate School and of the major department, (2) include undergraduate deficiencies and required courses specified on the student's "Certificate of Admission," (3) be certified by the student, the student's adviser, heads of departments offering major and minor fields, and the cognizant deans, and (4) list each course number and abbreviated title with the hours and grades. If the program is not satisfactory in the judgment of the graduate dean, it may be returned to the department for revision. When the "Application for Admission to Candidacy" has been approved by the graduate dean, the student will be formally admitted to candidacy for the master's degree.

### **Thesis**

A thesis in the major field is recommended and may be required, at the discretion of the department concerned.

Not more than six nor fewer than four thesis credits may be counted toward the requirements for a master's degree.

### **Continuous Enrollment**

Having once registered for thesis, a student must continue to register for a minimum of one credit in thesis or graduate course work each regular semester until the thesis is approved by the Graduate School and the copies have been accepted by the binding section in Branson Library. A student who fails to abide by this regulation will be considered withdrawn from the university and, in order to resume studies, must formally apply for readmission and satisfy the requirements in effect at the time of reapplication.

### **Graduate Committee**

The master's degree committee will consist of a minimum of three faculty members holding at least master's degrees. The committee chair and one other member must be in the student's department; however, the home department of one of these two committee members may be outside the student's department (see Graduate Faculty Guidelines section "Appointments Outside of Home Department"). The third person on the committee must serve as the dean's representative and cannot be a faculty member of the students' home department. The committee chair and the dean's representative must be members of the graduate faculty (please refer to "Guidelines for Graduate Faculty

Appointments"). If the student has a minor area of study then either the dean's representative or a fourth committee member must come from the minor department. If no minor is declared, the dean's representative may come from a related area (recommended by the committee chair) or be appointed independently by the dean of the Graduate School.

All students completing a written exam are required to have a dean's representative that reviews the process of administering the exam. The dean's representative that reviews the process can sign off on all of the exams of students taking a written exam for the given semester. The dean's representative must be from outside the students' home department.

The student's faculty committee is responsible for identifying a dean's representative and completing the examination forms. A list of graduate faculty is available at the web site of the Graduate School. Faculty can use the list to identify graduate faculty to serve as the dean's representative.

Departments can nominate individuals with a master's degree and/or doctoral degree and related experience for a temporary appointment to graduate faculty (Please see Appointment to Graduate Faculty of Non-NMSU Employees in the Guidelines on Graduate Faculty Appointments in this [Graduate Catalog](#)). Nomination letters must identify specific roles of the individual and the year(s) of service (up to three years per request per individual). The nomination letter must receive the endorsement of the academic dean. If granted a temporary appointment to graduate faculty, the individual will be limited to the specific role(s) identified by the department. Departments can request that the individual be allowed to serve as a dean's representative.

As indicated in the "Guidelines for Graduate Faculty Appointments," any qualified member of the graduate faculty may join any graduate program within a department. Applicants will be approved by the graduate program to which they are applying, through a process to be determined by that program, before their application is forwarded to the dean of the Graduate School. Departments may structure committees that include more than the minimum number of members as long as the stated conditions of membership are satisfied. Additional voting and nonvoting members may be any person approved or appointed by the dean of the Graduate School.

### **Final Examination**

Candidates take a final examination in accordance with the schedule provided by the Graduate School. **It is the student's responsibility to be sure that the form to schedule this examination is submitted to the Graduate School at least ten working days prior to the proposed date for the examination.**

Each candidate will be given a final examination conducted by the graduate committee.

At the time of the final examination, a graduate student must have an NMSU cumulative graduate grade-point average of at least 3.0 and must be enrolled in the final semester; or, if the student is writing a thesis, he or she must have completed all course work for the master's degree.

Students with the nonthesis option may be required to pay a special exam fee in lieu of registering for one credit hour of graduate course work. (See “Tuition, Fees, and Other Expenses.”)

The final examination format shall be determined by the department, with the approval of the graduate dean. If a department does not specify an examination format, the final examination shall be in part an oral defense of the thesis, if a thesis has been written, and in part a general examination of the candidate's field of study.

Any candidate who fails in the final examination may (1) upon recommendation of the adviser and approval of the graduate dean, be granted a second examination after a lapse of at least one semester, or (2) be excluded from further candidacy for the degree. Failure in the second examination disqualifies a candidate from obtaining the degree. Certification that the thesis has been accepted and that the final examination has been passed must be filed with the Graduate School not later than one week before the degree is conferred.

### **Time Limit**

The graduate program leading to the master's degree must be completed within seven years (or eight successive summers) including completion of the master's thesis or final project. Any course work more than seven years old at time of the final examination will not be included in the program.

### **Minors**

A candidate for a master's degree may select up to two minors in addition to the major. A minimum of nine credits of graduate work is necessary for a minor at the master's level. (See “Graduate Degree Programs, Specializations/ Concentrations, and Approved Minors” for a list of approved minors.) To record a minor on a student's permanent record, the minor must be listed on the “Application for Admission to Candidacy” and this form must be signed by the head of the department offering the minor program. At the oral examination, a committee member may move to remove the designation of a minor with the concurrence of the committee.

A minor will not be awarded after the degree has been posted to the transcript.

### **Second Master's Degree**

A student who has earned one master's degree at NMSU may be allowed to count a maximum of six semester credits earned on the first degree toward a second master's degree, if those credits fit into a logical graduate program. The number of shared credits may be increased for joint degree programs.

### **Joint Degree Programs**

Joint degree programs are formal courses of study in which two or more departments have obtained approval to issue joint degrees. These programs must have prior approval by the Graduate School. Students must apply and be accepted into graduate programs of each department participating in a specific joint degree program. Approved joint degrees are the Master in Public Administration/Master in Criminal Justice; Master of Public Health/Master of Social Work; Bachelor of Science in Engineering/Master of Business Administration; and Bachelor of Accountancy/Master of Accountancy.

### **Teacher Licensure**

Students wishing to take graduate courses for licensure or renewal of licensure or for personal enrichment must be fully admitted to a department to do so. Nondegree-seeking students may not register for teacher licensure classes. Endorsement is available at both the elementary and secondary levels in bilingual education, TESOL (Teaching of English as a Second Language), reading, and special education. Endorsement is also available in early childhood education at the elementary level. Contact [curric-instr@nmsu.edu](mailto:curric-instr@nmsu.edu) for more information.