MASTER'S DEGREES

Options for the Master’s Degree

The Graduate College offers the following master’s degrees:

- Master of Arts (MA)
- Master of Architectural Engineering (MAE)
- Master of Applied Science (MAS)
- Master of Arts for Teachers (MAT)
- Master of Business Administration (MBA)
- Master of Community and Regional Planning (MCRP)
- Master of Education (MED)
- Master of Engineering Management (MEM)
- Master of Fine Arts (MFA)
- Master of Legal Studies (MLS)
- Master of Music (MM)
- Master of Professional Accountancy (MPA)
- Master of Science (MS)
- Master of Science for Teachers (MST)

A master’s degree student may pursue a specific major under one of three options (see below). The major for the master’s degree under any option is comprised of approved courses in any department offering a program leading to the master’s degree. Some limitations concerning options may be imposed by a department where such a choice is not feasible. In choosing an option, a student should be guided by the type of training desired. A master’s degree student may change a declared option at any time during their program of study with written approval from the adviser, the Chair of the Graduate Committee in the student’s major, and the Dean for Graduate Studies. The only exception to this policy is that students may not change from Option I to any other option if certification of full time status (https://research.unl.edu/gradstudies/fulltime) has been utilized.

Option I

The master’s degree under Option I requires a thesis and should be chosen by students who are preparing for careers in research and scholarly work or additional academic pursuits beyond the master’s degree. Under this option a student must earn a minimum of 30 semester hours of credit, consisting of 20 to 24 semester hours of regular course work, and present a thesis equivalent to 6 to 10 semester hours. At least one-half of the required work, including thesis, must be taken in one major subject (at least 18 hours for the Master of Education degree). The remaining work may be in supporting courses or in a minor consisting of at least 9 semester hours. At least 8 hours, in addition to the thesis, must be earned in courses open exclusively to graduate students (900 level or 800 level without 400 or lower counterparts).

The subject of the thesis should be chosen from the student’s field of major interest and must be approved by the departmental Graduate Committee. The thesis should reveal a capacity to carry on independent study or research and should demonstrate the student’s ability to use the techniques employed in their field of investigation. The thesis must conform to the required style and format described in the Preparing a Thesis or Dissertation (https://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/degrees/guidelines) guidelines. An electronic copy of the thesis and abstract must be presented for preliminary review to the Master’s Programs Coordinator in the Office of Graduate Studies at least two weeks (one week in the summer sessions) before the date for the candidate’s oral examination. A candidate is not eligible for the oral examination until the thesis is completed and approved by the major adviser. After the thesis has been successfully defended, it must be electronically submitted to the Master’s Programs Coordinator for a final review prior to being uploaded to Digital Commons.

Research activities involving human subjects or live vertebrate animals may not be conducted at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln unless the research activities have been reviewed and approved by the appropriate board or committee. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviews projects involving human subject research and the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) reviews the use of animals in research. These reviews are in accordance with Federal regulations, state laws and institutional policies. Submission of protocols to conduct human subject or animal research is coordinated by the Research Responsibility (https://research.unl.edu/researchresponsibility) offices. Approval must be secured prior to the initiation of the research.

Option I is not open for the Master of Professional Accountancy degree.

Option II

The master’s degree under Option II requires a minor, but does not require a thesis. This option encourages a wider range of courses than is permissible under Option I. Students who have earned the master’s degree under Option II and later elect to pursue a doctoral degree must give evidence of ability to conduct independent research.

Under Option II, a student must earn 30 to 36 semester hours of credit in courses representing a major and either one or two minors. At least one-half of the credit hours required for the degree must be in the major. A minimum of 9 hours is required for each minor. The minor department determines the courses in their disciplinary field that comprise a minor. At the discretion of the minor department, up to one-third of the courses required for a minor may be transferred from other institutions. At least 12 hours for the degree must be earned in courses open exclusively to graduate students (900 or 800 level without 400 or lower counterparts).

The Master of Education degree requires at least 6 semester hours selected from education courses outside the major in lieu of a minor.

Option II is not open for the Master of Professional Accountancy degree.

Option III

The master’s degree under Option III is designed for students who plan to continue scholarly work in a chosen field past the master’s level. No thesis or minor is required; instead, Option III requires 30 to 36 semester hours of credit with a focus on advanced courses in the student’s chosen field. At least 18 hours must be in the major. At least 18 hours must be earned in courses open exclusively to graduate students (900 or 800 level without 400 or lower counterparts).

Option III is not open for the Master of Education degree.

Time to Complete a Master’s Degree

Completion of a master’s degree must occur within ten consecutive years from the first semester of enrollment. Course work exceeding ten years will not apply toward the fulfillment of the degree requirements for master’s degrees.
Memorandum of Courses
The Memorandum of Courses must be submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies before the student has completed more than one-half of the prescribed program. Prior to submission, the Memorandum of Courses must be approved by the student's adviser, the major departmental or area Graduate Committee Chair, and the minor department Graduate Committee Chair (if applicable). It is the student's responsibility to secure the proper approvals and to submit to the Master's Programs Coordinator, as described in Steps to Degree Completion (https://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/academics/degrees). Final review and approval of the Memorandum of Courses is made by the Dean for Graduate Studies. A student may NOT file a Memorandum of Courses and graduate in the same semester or summer term.

Admission to Candidacy
A student is admitted to Candidacy for the master's degree when admission deficiencies, if any, have been removed and when a Memorandum of Courses receives final approval.

Final Comprehensive Examination
A student pursuing a Master's degree is required to complete a final comprehensive examination, administered as a written and/or oral examination, within 24 months prior to the date of graduation. The comprehensive examination is required to cover the student's approved program of study, as specified by the major and minor (if applicable) departments. The comprehensive examination in the minor field(s) may be waived subject to the approval of the minor department(s), provided all grades in the minor department are at least a B or pass.

If an oral examination is required, the examining committee, approved by the Dean for Graduate Studies on recommendation of the major department, will consist of at least three members representing the major and minor (if applicable) departments. All professors on the examining committee must either be on the Graduate Faculty, or be non-Graduate Faculty approved to perform specified Graduate Faculty duties. If a member of the examining committee other than the chair leaves the employ of the University, or retires, a replacement should be appointed. In certain circumstances where continuing expertise is needed, the departing faculty member may continue as a member or co-chair of the committee, with approval of the department Graduate Committee and the Dean for Graduate Studies. If the master's degree is being earned under Option I without a final oral examination, the thesis must be approved in writing by a Graduate Faculty member in addition to the major adviser.

In the event that members of an oral examining committee are not unanimous regarding passing a Candidate, the student is to be approved for the degree if only one examiner dissents. In such cases, the dissenting member of the committee will be expected to file a letter of explanation in the Office of Graduate Studies.

If a student fails to pass the final oral or written examination for an advanced degree, their committee must file a report on the failure in the Office of Graduate Studies and indicate what the student must do before taking another examination. Another examination may not be held during the same semester or the same summer term in which the student failed.

Master's Thesis
The master's thesis and abstract in preliminary form must be approved by the adviser prior to applying for the final oral examination or for its waiver (at least four weeks prior to the examination). An electronic copy of the thesis and abstract in preliminary form must be submitted to Master's Programs Coordinator in the Office of Graduate Studies for approval at least two weeks (one week in summer) prior to the final oral examination. This copy will be reviewed and the student notified of any changes to be made. The guidelines for thesis preparation and submission deadlines are described in Steps to Degree Completion (https://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/academics/degrees).