



# **Degree Completion, Examination, and Graduation Manual**

**The Graduate School**

**University of Maryland, College Park  
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## Chapter 1: The Purpose of this Manual

This Manual is intended to serve as a guide to the administrative requirements of the Graduate School regarding the completion of Master's and Doctoral degrees at the University of Maryland. Adhering to the guidelines set forth in this Manual will help make the "home stretch" of your graduate experience at Maryland as hassle-free as possible, enabling you to focus more completely on producing the caliber of academic work the community has come to expect from the University.

While every attempt has been made to make this Manual as complete as possible, some departments may have requirements and deadlines that supersede those listed. Some departments, for example, require that you assemble and nominate the Dissertation Oral Examination committee prior to beginning the dissertation. **Please check with your department for specific departmental requirements and deadlines.**

You should begin preparing for the Degree Completion process at the earlier of two times: 1.) at the beginning of the semester in which coursework for the degree will be completed; or 2.) the beginning of what they anticipate will be their last YEAR at the university, i.e., the beginning of the semester PRIOR to that in which they expect to graduate. Having a year's lead-time will enable you to complete all administrative requirements for their degree promptly, eliminating problems that could delay receipt of the degree by as much as a full semester.

The Graduate School maintains a strict schedule of deadlines in regards to degree completion. These deadlines have specific purposes, often directly related to the logistical and administrative operations of the University, and will be enforced rigidly. **Only in the most extraordinary of circumstances will a deadline waiver be granted. YOU are ultimately responsible for ensuring that all required paperwork is submitted to the Graduate School within specified deadlines.**

## Chapter 2: Overview of the Degree Completion Process

Below are BASIC outlines for the Degree Completion Processes for both Master's and Doctoral degrees for the University of Maryland, College Park. These lists provide the essential progress of the latter-stages of most graduate degree experiences at the University. Graduate programs may have requirements beyond those listed here-- please check with your academic advisor AND departmental Graduate Studies office for specific program requirements.

### Basic Degree Completion Process—Master's Degree

1. Completion of Required Coursework
2. Submission of **Application for Graduation** and **Approved Program Form** to Office of the Registrar
3. Completion of Departmental Examination Requirements
4. Completion of Thesis / Departmental Writing Requirement
5. Nomination of Thesis Examining Committee\*
6. Thesis Oral Examination
7. Submission of **Report of Thesis Examination Committee** / Non-Thesis Students submit **Certification of Non-Thesis Master's Degree Form**.
8. Student electronically submits Thesis to Proquest Learning Services
9. Thesis evaluated / approved online by the Office of the Registrar
10. Graduation

\* Some departments require that the Thesis Examining Committee be nominated and assembled prior to the beginning of the Thesis. Check with your department.

### Basic Degree Completion Process—Doctoral Degree

1. Completion of Required Coursework
2. Completion of Departmental Language / Supplemental Examinations
3. Completion of Departmental Qualifying Examinations
4. Student Advances to Candidacy for the Degree
5. Beginning – Completion of Dissertation
6. Application for Graduation
7. Nomination of Dissertation Examination Committee
8. Dissertation Oral Examination (Dissertation Defense)
9. Report of Dissertation Examination Committee
10. Student electronically submits Dissertation to Proquest Learning Services
11. Dissertation evaluated / approved online by Office of the Registrar
12. Graduation

## Chapter 3: Degree Completion Process—The Master’s Degree

Note that all UMCP credits applied to the master’s degree must normally be no more than five years old at the time of the conferral of the degree, and that transfer credits may be no more than seven years old (and must be revalidated by the program) at the time of the conferral of the degree. Most master’s degree candidates must show registration for at least six credits of Thesis research credit (799). Non-Thesis Master’s degrees generally require more credits of coursework to replace the six credits of Thesis research. **All students must be registered for at least one credit during the semester in which they plan to graduate.**

Required Forms for the Master’s Degree: The forms required for the Master’s degree can be found online at the following URL: <http://www.gradschool.umd.edu/gss/forms>. They can also be picked up at the Graduate School, 2123 Lee Building (open M-F 8:30-4:30). Forms should be submitted to the appropriate authority (The Graduate School or Office of the Registrar) in accordance with stated deadlines. Please consult each form for submission instructions.

1. Application for Graduation (available online at <http://www.testudo.umd.edu>)
2. Nomination of Examining Committee
3. Approved Program Form
4. Report of Examining Committee: This form is generated by the Office of the Registrar and sent to your department. Please check with your department as to the status of your Report to ensure that it reaches the Office of the Registrar by the stated deadline. Also note that the approval of the Thesis on the Report must be unanimous.

If the degree is a non-Thesis Master’s, then submit:

5. Certification of Master’s Degree Without Thesis

If research involves animal or human subjects, or hazardous materials:

6. Approval from a departmental Human Subjects Review Committee (HSR), campus Institutional Review Board (IRB), or Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) must be attached to the Nomination of Examining Committee Form.

### **Step 1. Student Completes Required Coursework for the Degree**

Each Master's program requires a different number of coursework-based credit hours for the completion of the degree. This requirement is usually for between 24-60 credit hours. For specific program information on coursework completion requirements, please contact the Graduate Studies Office in your department, or consult the Graduate Catalog Program Listings at <http://www.gradschool.umd.edu/catalog/programs.htm>. These resources will provide specific requirements for coursework in each discipline / program, including skill and competency distribution requirements.

### **Step 2. Application For Graduation / Approved Program Form**

At the beginning of the semester in which you expect to graduate, you should complete the electronic **Application for Graduation** (<http://www.testudo.umd.edu>) and submit an **Approved Program Form** to the Office of the Registrar. The Application for Graduation ensures that the degree will be posted to your transcript and that a diploma will be printed, provided that all requirements are met during the semester in which the Application is completed. If you do NOT fulfill the requirements in the given semester, the Application for Graduation will roll over to the subsequent semester. **If you THINK that you MAY be able to complete your degree within two semesters, APPLY FOR GRADUATION. This form should be completed prior to the end of Drop / Add for the semester in which you plan to graduate.**

Also required at the outset of the Degree Completion process is the submission of an **Approved Program Form** to the Office of the Registrar. This form assures the University that your individual course of study conforms to the academic guidelines set by the Dean of the Graduate School and the Graduate Council. The Approved Program Form is a requirement for completion of a Master's degree at the University of Maryland, College Park. Failure to submit an Approved Program form by the specified deadline WILL result in a delay in graduation. Petitions for Waiver of this Regulation will not be granted except in extremely extenuating circumstances. It is **YOUR** responsibility to ensure that this form is submitted by their program / department on their behalf; departmental clerical error is not grounds for regulation waiver. Check with your department's Graduate Studies Office to make sure they submit this form by the stated deadline.

For a schedule of deadlines for submission of the Graduation Application and Approved Program Form, please see the Schedule of Graduate School Deadlines at <http://www.gradschool.umd.edu/deadlines>. These deadlines are also available in the Schedule of Classes on <http://www.testudo.umd.edu>.

### **Step 3. Completion of Departmental Examination Processes**

Many departments require examinations or pro-thesis requirements to be completed in addition to coursework and Thesis requirements. For terminal master's degrees, these requirements are often the equivalent of qualifying or comprehensive examinations. These are in most cases a precursor to the completion of a Thesis or other capstone writing project. In some cases, however, passing a departmental exam or research practicum can be the final requirement for non-terminal master's degrees (i.e., in degree programs that lead to the doctoral degree).

### **Step 4. The Master's Thesis / Capstone Writing Project**

Most Graduate Programs at the University of Maryland, College Park require some form of terminal writing project as the final requirement for the Master's degree. Each program maintains its own unique requirements regarding the Thesis. Some departments require that you nominate your Thesis examining committee prior to beginning your Thesis—check with the Graduate Studies Office for specific requirements. All programs, however, require that the Thesis / capstone project be a substantial project overseen and evaluated by a faculty member (or Graduate School-approved committee of faculty members). Each Thesis should conform to the standards of research in its discipline. For guidelines on writing the Thesis, please consult both with your academic advisor / overseeing faculty member, AND the Graduate School Thesis and Dissertation Style Guide, located on the web at <http://www.gradschool.umd.edu/publications> .

### **Step 5. The Master's Thesis Examination (Master's Thesis Defense).**

Students submitting a Thesis are required to undergo a Thesis examination in accordance with the policies of the Graduate School. Prior to holding a Thesis Examination, you must, in consultation with your academic advisor submit a **Nomination of Thesis Examining Committee** form to the Graduate School. This form ensures that all members of the Thesis Examining Committee are approved members of the Graduate Faculty of the University of Maryland, College Park. Thesis Examinations conducted by committees not fully approved by the Graduate School will not count as satisfying the Graduate School Thesis Examination requirement, and will be voided.

For Master's Thesis Examination procedures, please consult the Graduate Catalog at <http://www.gradschool.umd.edu/catalog>.

**Master's Degree Candidates (Non-Thesis).** Some master's degree programs offer a non-Thesis option. Aside from the master's examination, these candidates must meet the same requirements as other students, and they must submit a Certification of Master's Degree Without Thesis Form. Please see the Graduate Catalog at <http://www.gradschool.umd.edu/catalog> for more information on non-Thesis master's degrees.

**Step 6. Thesis Committee Chair Files Report of Thesis Examining Committee**

After a successful Thesis examination, in which all members of the committee certify satisfactory completion of Thesis requirements, the department submits to the Office of the Registrar the Report of the Thesis Examining Committee. This form officially certifies to the Graduate School completion of the Thesis and examination. Submission of this form is a requirement both for degree clearance and acceptance of the Thesis document by the Graduate School Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Program.

**Step 7. Student Submits Thesis via the Web to The Graduate School and Proquest Learning Services**

The University of Maryland, College Park accepts Theses (and Dissertations) electronically via the World Wide Web. A detailed explanation of this process, technical and formatting guidelines for the Thesis, and pre-formatted electronic templates are available in the **Thesis and Dissertation Style Guide**, located on the Graduate School web site: <http://www.gradschool.umd.edu/publications>. Once the Thesis is submitted to Proquest, the Graduate School will check it for formatting and other required elements, and either accept the Thesis, reject it, or require changes or corrections. Once the Thesis meets all formatting and other requirements, it is accepted by the Office of the Registrar and the Degree Clearance process is begun. Please check the schedule of Graduate School Deadlines, <http://www.gradschool.umd.edu/deadlines> for dates by which Theses and Dissertations must be submitted.

**Step 8. Student is Cleared for Graduation**

After the Thesis is accepted by the Office of the Registrar, provided all other degree requirements (Graduate School and Departmental) are met—including filing the Application for Graduation—you are cleared for graduation for the next commencement period. Degrees are posted to transcripts in May, August, and December, with commencement ceremonies held in May and December.

## Chapter 4: Degree Completion Process—The Doctoral Degree

**Doctoral Degree Candidates.** Most doctoral degree candidates must show registration for at least twelve credits of courses numbered 899: Dissertation Research. Students seeking the Ed.D. must complete from 6 to 9 credits of 899 research. In addition, doctoral candidates must have been advanced to doctoral candidacy at least six months before graduation. **Doctoral students will be registered automatically for 6 credits of 899 for each semester of their candidacy. For this registration, candidates will pay a flat candidacy tuition, equivalent to approximately 1.6 credit hours of graduate tuition.**

Required Forms: The forms required for the Doctoral degree can be found online at the following URL: <http://www.gradschool.umd.edu/gss/forms>. They can also be picked up at the Graduate Information Center, 2123 Lee Building (open M-F 8:30-4:30). Forms should be submitted to the appropriate authority (see forms for specific instructions) in accordance to stated deadlines.

1. Application for Graduation
2. Nomination of Examining Committee
3. Report of Examining Committee—This form is generated by The Office of the Registrar and provided to your department. Please check with the department to ensure that this Report is submitted to the Graduate School by the stated deadline.
4. Survey of Earned Doctorates

If research involves human subjects, animals, or hazardous materials, also provide

5. Approval from a departmental Human Subjects Review Committee (HSR), Campus Institutional Review Board (IRB), or the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC).

### **Step 1. Student Completes All Required Coursework for the Degree**

Each Doctoral program requires a different number of coursework-based credit hours for the completion of the degree. This requirement usually ranges from 24-60 credit hours; for specific program information on coursework completion requirements, please contact the Graduate Studies Office in your department, or consult the Graduate Catalog Program Listings at <http://www.gradschool.umd.edu/catalog/programs> for specific requirements for coursework in each discipline / program, including skill and competency distribution requirements.

## **Step 2. Student Completes Supplemental Departmental Examinations**

Some doctoral programs require the completion of competency examinations apart from Departmental Qualifying examinations. These can include foreign language examinations, research practice, or other discipline-related topic. Please contact the Director of Graduate Studies in your department or consult the Graduate Catalog Program Listings at <http://www.gradschool.umd.edu/catalog/programs> for specific examination requirements.

## **Step 3. Student Completes Departmental Qualifying Examinations**

After the completion of all departmental coursework and supplementary examination requirements, you must complete all Departmental Qualifying Examinations. These examinations are defined by the Department or Graduate Program, and are intended to verify doctoral-level competency within the discipline. Please consult the Graduate Studies Office in your program or your academic advisor for specific procedures and directions regarding the Qualifying Examination process.

## **Step 4. Student Advances to Candidacy**

Upon the completion of all departmental coursework and examination requirements, including the Qualifying Examination(s), you are eligible to Advance to Candidacy for the Doctoral Degree. To do this, you must, with the approval of your academic advisor *and* the Director of Graduate Studies in the program, complete the Application for Admission to Candidacy Form. This form is available at the Graduate Information Center (2125 Lee Building, 8:30am-4:30pm), or on the web at <http://www.gradschool.umd.edu/gss/forms/>.

The Application for Admission to Candidacy form is a requirement you to become a degree candidate, the final step toward completion of the dissertation. It is your responsibility to secure the signatures of the Director of Graduate Studies and your academic advisor on the Advancement to Candidacy form. Once a complete Admission to Candidacy Form is received by the Office of the Registrar, you are assigned the status of “Degree Candidate.” You are now free to begin the Dissertation process.

Once a “Degree Candidate,” you are entitled, if a Graduate Assistant, to an elevated level of compensation (Step III). If you do not submit an Admission to Candidacy application, you will not receive this increase in compensation—be sure to make your department aware of your change in status. Failure to submit the Admission to Candidacy Application may also delay graduation, and you must be advanced to candidacy six months prior to the conferral of the degree.

As a Degree Candidate, you will be automatically registered each semester for 6 credits of Dissertation Research (899). For these six credits, you will be billed the flat

Candidacy Tuition (equivalent to about 1.5 credits), which will designate you as a full-time student.

## **Step 6. The Dissertation Process**

All Doctoral programs at the University of Maryland, College Park require a dissertation—a major contribution to scholarship—as a capstone requirement for the degree. Each discipline maintains its own standards in regard to research practices, operating principles, formatting and documentation methods. You should consult closely with your academic advisor on the departmental procedures and expectations for the dissertation.

The Graduate School maintains a set of standards regarding the dissertation apart from those established by the department or program. These standards pertain to the method of submission of the Dissertation to the Graduate School via Proquest Learning and Information Services, as well as to physical and electronic formatting. A guide to the Graduate School standards for the Dissertation is available in the **Thesis and Dissertation Style Guide**, located on the web at <http://www.gradschool.umd.edu/publications>. You should download this document at the beginning of the dissertation process. There is also a pre-formatted Dissertation Template available for download at the same site.

## **Step 7. Application for Graduation**

At the beginning of the semester in which you expect to graduate, you should complete the electronic Application for Graduation. The Application for Graduation ensures that the degree will be posted to your transcript in a timely fashion and that a diploma will be printed, provided that all requirements are met during the semester in which the Application is completed. **If you do NOT fulfill the requirements in the given semester, the Application will roll over to the subsequent semester without penalty. Thus, if you THINK that you MAY be able to complete their degree within two semesters, you should complete the application for graduation.**

Failure to submit the Application for Graduation is by far the most common reason for delays in Graduation. **If you do not fill out the Application by the stated deadline you will not graduate in the current semester;** you will have to wait until the next commencement period. The University of Maryland confers degrees in May, August, and December, holding commencement ceremonies in May and December. For a complete schedule of deadlines for submission of the Graduation Application please see the Schedule of Graduate School Deadlines at <http://www.gradschool.umd.edu/deadines>.

## **Step 8. The Dissertation Oral Examination**

As you near completion of the dissertation (6-8 months prior to completion), you should consult with your academic advisor in regard to preparations for the Dissertation Oral Examination (formerly known as the Dissertation Oral Defense). The Dissertation Examining Committee will be comprised of faculty members familiar with your research as well as the acceptable standards in the discipline. Each committee is made up of five (or more) members—four members from your discipline (chosen by you and your academic advisor), and a Representative of the Dean of the Graduate School. The Dean’s Representative is present at the defense to ensure that all Graduate School policies and procedures are followed. The Dean’s Representative must be a Tenured member of the Graduate Faculty.

The members of the committee are nominated by the academic advisor in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies or Department Chair. Each member of the Dissertation Examining Committee must be a Member of the Graduate Faculty, either with a Full, Special, or Adjunct membership. Tenured and tenure-track faculty are awarded Full membership as a condition of employment. Special or Adjunct members—those who are not members of the UMCP community—must be nominated for membership on the Graduate Faculty. The Nomination for Membership on the Graduate Faculty form is available at <http://www.gradschool.umd.edu/gss/forms>.

All Dissertation Examining Committees must be approved by the Graduate School through a Nomination of a Dissertation Examining Committee Form, located at <http://www.gradschool.umd.edu/gss/forms>. Dissertation Oral Examinations conducted without approval by the Graduate School –without all committee members accredited as Graduate Faculty—will be declared invalid. The Nomination of Dissertation Examining Committee form must be submitted **AT LEAST SIX WEEKS PRIOR TO THE SCHEDULED DATE OF THE EXAMINATION**.

For specific procedures on conducting a dissertation oral examination, please consult the Graduate Catalog at <http://www.gradschool.umd.edu/catalog>.

## **Step 9. Report of Dissertation Examination Committee (Passage / Failure)**

More than one committee member refusing to sign the Report of the Examination Committee results in a dissertation being ruled as “not satisfactory.” The Dissertation passes if one member refuses to sign the Report, but the other members of the Dissertation Examining Committee agree to sign, before or after the approval of any recommended changes. Two or more negative votes constitute a failure of the candidate to meet the dissertation requirement. **In cases of failure, the Dissertation Examining Committee must specify in detail and in writing the nature of the deficiencies in the dissertation and/or the oral performance that led to failure.** This statement is to be submitted to the program's Director of Graduate Studies, the Dean of the Graduate School, and to you. A second Examination may be permitted if you will be in good standing at the time of the proposed second Examination. A second Examination requires

the approval of the program's Director of Graduate Studies and the Dean of the Graduate School. If you fail this second Examination, or if a second Examination is not permitted, your admission to the graduate program is terminated.

The chair will then verify that all changes / corrections are made to the dissertation and will file the Report. Once the Report is filed, you will be cleared to submit the dissertation electronically to Proquest Learning Services.

#### **Step 10. Student Submits Dissertation to Proquest Learning Services**

The University of Maryland, College Park accepts dissertations electronically via the World Wide Web. A detailed explanation of this process, along with technical and formatting guidelines for the document are available in the **Thesis and Dissertation Style Guide**, located on the Graduate School web site:

<http://www.gradschool.umd.edu/publications>. Once the document is submitted to Proquest, the Graduate School will check it for formatting and other required elements and either accept the Thesis, reject it, or require changes / corrections. Once the document meets all formatting and other requirements, it is accepted by the Office of the Registrar and the Degree Clearance process is begun.

#### **Step 11. Student Cleared for Graduation**

After the dissertation is accepted by the Office of the Registrar, provided all other degree requirements (Graduate School and Departmental) are met—including filing the Application for Graduation—you are cleared for graduation for the next commencement period. Commencements are held and degrees posted to transcripts in May, August, and December.