

# 3.1 Graduate School Minimum Requirements

## A. Master of Arts and Master of Science

All Master of Science and Master of Arts degree programs are planned with the objective of making possible a reasonable, comprehensive mastery of the subject matter in a chosen field. In most cases, the Master of Science and Master of Arts programs provide training and experience in research in order to familiarize the student with the methods, ideals and goals of independent investigation. In these cases, representative of most Master of Science and Master of Arts degree programs, a thesis is required. A small number of Master of Science and Master of Arts programs do not require a thesis.

Students in the Master of Arts or Master of Science programs follow the individual program and the Graduate School requirements that were in effect when they entered the program.

The following are minimum requirements for a degree in Master of Science or Master of Arts degree programs:

1. A minimum of 30 semester hours of graduate work in the degree program, unless the specific program requires more hours.
2. A reading knowledge of a foreign language (in a few programs; see Section 3.5 (<http://catalog.ncsu.edu/graduate/graduate-handbook/comprehensive-examinations/>))
3. A comprehensive written examination (in some programs)
4. A thesis (in most programs)
5. A comprehensive oral examination (except Option B programs)

**Note:** Requirements for ALL master's degrees must be completed within six (6) calendar years. For further information about the time limited for degrees, see Section 3.4 (<http://catalog.ncsu.edu/graduate/graduate-handbook/time-limits/>).

## B. Master's Degree in a Designated Field

A number of departments and programs offer master's degrees in designated fields. These are professional degrees and do not require a thesis. Master's Thesis Research (XXX 695) may not be included as part of the Plan of Work.

Requirements include the following:

1. A minimum of 30 semester hours of graduate work in the degree program (unless the specific program requires more hours).
2. A comprehensive written examination (in some programs)
3. A comprehensive oral examination (except Option B programs)

## C. Option B Master's Degree

The Option B Master's degree requires that students adhere to the general guidelines for a Master of Arts or Master of Science degree with the following exceptions:

1. A comprehensive oral exam is not required
2. A thesis is not required
3. Master's Thesis Research (XXX 695) may not be included as part of the Plan of Work

4. Individual departments define other requirements for their Option B program, such as additional course work or final projects
5. Option B Master's degree programs cannot carry an officially designated minor
6. Students have a single assigned advisor rather than an advisory committee.

## Changing Master's Programs to "Option B"

Master's degree programs that require final oral examinations may petition the Graduate School for permission to operate the program with a single advisor and to eliminate the final oral examination (Option B). Option B Master's degree programs may not carry an officially designated minor.

Petitions need the approval of school/college-level Graduate Studies Committees and must be made for an entire degree program, rather than for individual students. The Administrative Board of the Graduate School will review each petition and make appropriate recommendations to the Dean of the Graduate School. The petition form is entitled Proposal for Changing Non-Thesis Graduate Degree Program Requirements to Option B.

## D. Credit Hour Requirements for Master's Degrees

[Recommended by the Administrative Board of the Graduate School and approved by the Dean of the Graduate School on 6/17/2009]

A minimum of 30 semester credit hours is required for all master's degrees. Students may take more than the minimum hours required by their programs. The Graduate School does not give credit for non-credit course work (i.e. non-departmental seminars, workshops, short courses, conferences, and any "life experience" offerings). Furthermore, the Graduate School does not allow credit by examination.

The following are specific credit-hour limitations:

1. At least 18 credit hours must be graduate credits earned while the student is enrolled in the graduate program.
2. The remaining 12 credit hours or more, depending on the requirements of the specific program, may be transferred from any of the sources or any combination thereof set forth below as transfer credit.
3. At least 18 credit hours of letter-graded courses ("A," "B," "C", etc.) must be included in the program. These must be NC State or inter-institutional courses.
4. No more than six credit hours of 400-level (undergraduate) courses may be counted toward the degree, and they may not come from the major field.
5. Credit hours for the following courses may NOT be used to satisfy the 30-credit hour requirement: Non-Thesis Master's Examination (XXX 690), Summer Thesis Research (XXX 696), Non-Thesis Master's Continuous Registration (XXX 688 and XXX 689).
6. No more than 12 credit hours may be used to satisfy degree requirements for another master's degree program at NC State, unless the student did not complete the other program. (See Section 3.11.A Multiple Master's Degrees).
7. Courses at the 900 level may not be counted toward a master's degree.

## Transfer of Credits

1. Transfer of graduate credits earned at other universities. A course that was completed at another college or university may be considered for transfer to a master's program provided that:
  - a. The course is classified as a graduate course.
  - b. It was completed while the student was in a graduate or post-baccalaureate classification.
  - c. It was not taken as a part of a previous master's degree program at another institution.
  - d. The grade in the course is B or better. Courses with grades of B- or lower will not be allowed to transfer.
  - e. The college or university is accredited by one of the following six U.S. regional accrediting agencies: the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, the New England Association of Colleges and Schools, the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, the Northwest Association of Colleges and Schools, or the Western Association of Colleges and Schools.
  - f. Course(s) must have been taken within 6 years of the planned NCSU graduation year.

Exceptions are allowed for transfer from international institutions if the department or program provides the Graduate School with adequate documentation that the course is relevant to the graduate degree and comparable to an equivalent course at NC State, and that the course was taught by faculty who are qualified to teach at the level of a master's degree. Where the grading system and grading culture in such institutions differ from that at NC State, students may (with the help of the Study Abroad Office) provide a letter to the Graduate School establishing the minimum average grade required for a graduate degree from that institution. That grade will be taken as the minimum grade for transfer in lieu of the "B" noted in 1(d) above.

2. Transfer of graduate credits earned while enrolled in an undergraduate program at NC State University. A course that was completed while the student was enrolled as an undergraduate at NC State University may be considered for transfer to a master's program or graduate certificate provided that it is at the 400-level (subject to the restrictions state in subsection D.4 above) or higher, that the earned grade is B or better, that it was not counted toward fulfillment of undergraduate requirements, and that it is verified by the undergraduate coordinator and recommended by the DGP. No credit will be allowed for a course completed in an undergraduate classification at another institution. Courses with grades of B- or lower will not be allowed to transfer. (NOTE: Students admitted into a Accelerated Bachelor's/Master's (ABM) program may use up to 12 hours of graduate credit [500 or 700 level] to satisfy requirements for both the bachelor's and the master's degrees.)
3. Transfer of graduate credits earned while enrolled in a previous graduate degree program at NC State University. A graduate course that was completed while the student was enrolled in a previous graduate program at NC State University may be considered for transfer to a master's program, provided that: (a) The course was a letter-graded ("A," "B," "C," etc.) 500- or 700-level course and that the grade is B or better. Courses with grades of B- or lower will not be allowed to transfer; and (b) it was not taken as a part of a completed master's degree at another institution. Courses from other institutions cannot be transferred into a graduate certificate.

4. Transfer of Post-Baccalaureate Studies (PBS) graduate credits earned at NC State University. A graduate course that was completed while the student was enrolled in PBS status at NC State University may be considered for transfer to a master's or certificate program provided that it is at the 500 level or higher and that the grade is B or better. Courses with grades of B- or lower will not be allowed to transfer. All PBS credits that are used to satisfy requirements of a specific master's degree or graduate certificate must be earned before the student is admitted to that degree program. A maximum of 12 credit hours taken while in PBS status may be transferred into a master's degree program; a maximum of 6 credits taken in PBS status may be transferred into a graduate certificate. See Section 2.3 (<http://catalog.ncsu.edu/graduate/graduate-handbook/admissions/>) for information on admission to PBS classification. If a student's graduate degree program or certificate is terminated, s/he cannot use courses taken in PBS status after termination for credit toward the same graduate degree program.

## Submitting Transfer Credit for Graduate School Approval

When the graduate program submits the online Plan of Graduate Work through MyPack Portal, the DGP submits a letter requesting that any transfer credit be accepted as part of the student's master's program. An official transcript indicating the work to be transferred must accompany the letter.

## E. Doctor of Philosophy and Doctor of Education

Doctoral students must demonstrate their ability to undertake scholarly research by writing a dissertation reporting the results of an original investigation, by passing a series of written and oral preliminary examinations in the field of specialization and related areas of knowledge, and by successfully defending the dissertation.

The following are requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy and Doctor of Education degree programs:

1. Doctoral degrees at North Carolina State University require a minimum of 72 graduate credit hours beyond the bachelor's degree.
2. Students cannot take 400-level courses or lower as part of the credit-hour requirement.
3. Students cannot use 900-level courses to satisfy the credit-hour requirement.
4. For a student who has a master's degree from a university other than NC State, a maximum of 18 hours of relevant graduate credit from the master's degree may be applied toward this minimum, upon the recommendation of the student's Graduate Advisory Committee. Therefore, the minimum credit-hour requirement in this case is 54 credit hours. Students whose previous master's was combined with a three-year bachelor's degree from a non-Bologna institution to meet the minimum requirements for admission will not be entitled to this 18 credit allowance and will not be considered to have a previous master's.
5. If a student completes a master's degree at NC State and continues for a doctoral degree without a break in time, up to 36 relevant credit hours taken while in master's status may be used to meet minimum requirements for the doctoral degree. If there is a break in time between completing the master's (at NC State) and beginning the doctorate (at NC State), the allowance is limited to 18 hours. Either

allowance may include those 400-level courses taken as an approved part of the master's degree.

6. A graduate course that was completed while the student was enrolled in PBS status at NC State University may be considered for transfer to a doctoral program provided that it is a 500- or 700-level course and that the grade is B or better (see Section 2.3 (<http://catalog.ncsu.edu/graduate/graduate-handbook/admissions/>) for information on admission to PBS classification). Courses with grades of B- or lower will not be allowed to transfer. All PBS credits that are used to satisfy requirements of a specific doctoral degree must be earned before the student is admitted to that degree program. These courses must be evaluated and recommended by the student's advisory committee on the basis of appropriateness and currency of the course material. In such cases, the student's degree clock starts with the first of these courses approved for inclusion in a plan of work (POW). Final approval is given by the DGP upon submission of the POW to the Graduate School. A maximum of 12 credit hours taken while in PBS status may be transferred into a doctoral degree program.
7. Students who hold a Ph.D. are generally not admissible for a second Ph.D. unless a "special exception" is requested and granted (see Section 2.3 (<http://catalog.ncsu.edu/graduate/graduate-handbook/admissions/>) and REG 2.15.01).
8. A successful preliminary comprehensive examination (written and oral components)
9. A dissertation.
10. A successful final comprehensive oral examination (dissertation defense).

**Note:** Doctoral students must attain candidacy for the degree within four (4) calendar years. The time limit for completing all requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy and Doctor of Education degrees is noted in Section 3.4 (<http://catalog.ncsu.edu/graduate/graduate-handbook/time-limits/>).

## Transfer of Credits

1. Transfer of course credits into a doctoral program is always at the discretion of a given program's DGP and requires their approval to be included within the degree requirements for a given program. Some programs might not allow transfer of credit.
2. Transfer of up to 18 graduate credits, inclusive of master's credits, earned at other universities:
  - a. A course that was completed at another US college or university may be considered for transfer to a doctoral program provided that:
    - i. The course is classified as a graduate course.
    - ii. It was completed while the student was in a graduate or post-baccalaureate classification.
    - iii. The grade in the course is B or better. Courses with grades of B- or lower are not eligible for transfer.
    - iv. The college or university is accredited by one of the following six U.S. regional accrediting agencies: the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools,

the New England Association of Colleges and Schools, the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, the Northwest Association of Colleges and Schools, or the Western Association of Colleges and Schools.

- V. Course(s) must have been taken at most 5 years of the matriculation into an NC State doctoral program although this limit does not apply to a completed master's degree.
- vi. Courses taken at other institutions, other than those approved as interinstitutional or other preapproved coursework, such as study abroad, during the time a student is enrolled in a doctoral program at NC State are not eligible for transfer.
- b. Transfer from international institutions is allowed if the department or program provides the Graduate School with adequate documentation that the course is relevant to the graduate degree and comparable to an equivalent course at NC State.
3. Transfer of up to 12 graduate credits earned while enrolled in an undergraduate program at NC State University. A course that was completed while the student was enrolled as an undergraduate at NC State University may be considered for transfer into a doctoral program provided that it is:
  - a. at the 500-level or higher, that the earned grade is B or better.
  - b. that it was not counted toward fulfillment of undergraduate requirements
  - c. recommended by the DGP.
  - d. No credit will be allowed for a course completed in an undergraduate classification at another institution.

4. Transfer of Post-Baccalaureate Studies (PBS) graduate credits earned at NC State University. A graduate course that was completed while the student was enrolled in PBS status at NC State University may be considered for transfer into a doctoral program provided that it is at the 500 level or higher and that the grade is B or better. Courses with grades of B- or lower will not be allowed to transfer. All PBS credits that are used to satisfy requirements of a doctoral program must be earned before the student is admitted to that degree program. A maximum of 12 credit hours taken while in PBS status may be transferred into a doctoral program. See Section 2.3 (<https://catalog.ncsu.edu/graduate/graduate-handbook/admissions/>) for information on admission to PBS classification.