

MASTER'S DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

A student enrolled in a master's program must satisfy the degree requirements of both the Graduate School and the major department. The requirements listed below are the minimum standards of the Graduate School; additional requirements are set forth by the major department.

A graduate student is responsible for becoming informed about and observing all regulations and procedures required by the graduate program pursued. Ignorance of a rule does not constitute a basis for waiving that rule. Any exceptions to the policies stated in this catalog must be approved by the Dean of the Graduate School.

Minimum Registration Requirement

For purposes of deciding full-time registration status, a student must meet one of the following criteria:

Master's Students

- One who is carrying a minimum of 5 credits of graduate-level coursework (pass/fail or for a grade), 8 credits of combined undergraduate and graduate coursework or 12 hours of undergraduate-level coursework
- At least 1 master's thesis hour
- At least 1 hour of "Master's Candidate for Degree"

Additional full-time and part-time registration requirements may exist for international students or students receiving or deferring financial aid, though degree requirements remain the same. Affected students should consult with International Student and Scholar Services or the Office of Financial Aid for more information.

Master's degree minimum registration requirements can be met only by registering full-time at CU Boulder for at least two semesters, part-time for at least four semesters, or full-time for at least one semester and part-time for at least two semesters.

Degree Requirements

The minimum requirement for the master's degree is 30 credit hours. A student may complete a Plan I (thesis) option, or a Plan II (coursework) option. At least 24 credit hours must be completed at the 5000 level or above; these 24 credit hours must include a minimum of 4, but not more than 6, thesis credit hours for those students completing a Plan I degree. A maximum of 6 credit hours may be completed at the 3000 or 4000 level at the discretion of the academic department.

Independent study coursework cannot exceed 25 percent (rounded to the nearest whole number) of the coursework required for the master's degree.

Language Requirement

There is no campuswide foreign language requirement for the master's degree. The decision regarding the foreign language requirement for each graduate degree is the responsibility of the graduate program.

Master's Thesis

A thesis, which may be research or expository, critical or creative work, is required of every master's degree candidate under Plan I. Every thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for an advanced degree must accomplish the following:

- represent the equivalent of 4–6 credit hours of work, and
- comply in mechanical features with the specifications for theses and dissertations available in the Graduate School.

The final grade is withheld until the thesis is completed; if the thesis is not finished at the end of the term in which the student is registered, an in-progress (IP) grade is reported.

Candidacy and Graduation

To be granted a master's degree, a student must become a candidate for that degree by filing an Application for Admission to Candidacy with the Graduate School no later than the posted graduation deadlines during the semester in which he or she plans to have the degree conferred. Students must meet all posted graduation deadlines in order to receive a degree in any given semester.

Time Limit

Master's degree students have four years (six years for students pursuing an ME) from the semester in which they are admitted and begin coursework to complete all degree requirements. The phrase "all degree requirements" includes the filing of the thesis with the Graduate School if Plan I is followed. Students who fail to complete the degree in this four-year period may be dismissed from their program with the concurrence of the major advisor and/or appropriate departmental personnel. To continue, the student must file a petition for an extension of the time limit with the Dean of the Graduate School. Such petitions must be endorsed by the student's major advisor and/or other appropriate departmental personnel and may be granted for up to one year.

Students who have not completed the degree within their time limit, and who have received approval for an extension, must have any coursework completed more than five years prior to the completion of the degree requirements evaluated by their department for relevance and applicability. At the discretion of the department the student may be required to validate these courses as part of the completion of their degree requirements.

Students who need to leave CU Boulder for a period of time may apply for a graduate leave of absence for up to one year. Taking a leave of absence does not extend the student's time limit, but may be used as a reason to request an extension.

Students whose registration at CU Boulder is interrupted by military service may apply to the Dean of the Graduate School for an extension.

Comprehensive-Final Examination

Each candidate for a master's degree is required to complete a comprehensive final examination/thesis defense after the other requirements for the degree have been substantially completed. In some programs, students are instead required to present an approved degree plan which meets the requirements of the field and represents an intellectually coherent graduate education as determined by the major department. The examination/defense may be given near the end of the student's last semester while the candidate is still taking required courses for the degree, provided satisfactory progress is being made in those courses. For those programs not requiring a final examination for all non-thesis students, the approved degree plan must be endorsed by the department chair, graduate director and major advisor on the Degree Plan Approval Form.

The following rules apply to the comprehensive-final examination/thesis defense:

1. A student must be registered on the Boulder campus as a regular degree-seeking student during the semester the examination is passed.
2. Notice of the examination/defense must be filed by the major department in the Graduate School at least two weeks prior to the examination. The examination/defense must be scheduled not later than the posted deadline for the semester in which the degree is to be conferred.
3. The examination/defense is given by a committee composed of three Graduate Faculty members appointed by the department with approval of the Dean of the Graduate School. The chair of the committee must have a regular Graduate Faculty appointment. Other committee members must have either a regular or special Graduate Faculty appointment.
4. The examination/defense, which may be oral, written, or both, must cover the thesis (if applicable), which should be essentially complete, other work completed in courses and seminars in the major field, and all work presented for the degree.
5. A student must have an affirmative vote from the majority of the committee members to pass. A student who fails the comprehensive-final examination/thesis defense may attempt it once more after a period of time determined by the examining committee.

Graduate Faculty Appointments for Courses and Exams

All courses, 5000 level or above, completed to fulfill graduate degree requirements must be taught by members of the graduate faculty. In addition, any faculty member serving on a master's or doctoral examination/defense committee must hold a current graduate faculty appointment. Membership on the university faculty does not automatically constitute an appointment to the graduate faculty. Contact your departmental graduate program assistant for questions concerning these appointments.