

ACADEMIC RULES FOR RESEARCH MASTER'S PROGRAMS

Effective July 1, 2024

The Research Master's degree is granted by the Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania upon the approval of the Graduate Council of the Faculties and upon satisfaction of all degree requirements.

The University's standards, set forth below, are to be viewed as minimum requirements. The School or the Graduate Group has the right to establish additional requirements for Research Master's degrees and to refuse to examine any student who is not qualified according to its standards. If there are additional program or School requirements, that information must be communicated and available to all students.

The University awards the following Research Master's degrees:

M.A. – Master of Arts

M.S. – Master of Science

All other Master's degrees are considered professional programs and are granted by the individual Schools.

I. Academic Requirements

The Research Master's degree represents the successful completion of at least a full academic year (two terms) of graduate work including some training in research.

a. Course Requirements

A minimum of eight course units is required for the Research Master's degree. Additional work may be prescribed by the Graduate Group. Courses must be level 5000 or above, unless otherwise approved by the Graduate Group.

Any student registered for four course units in a single term may register as an auditor for one additional course with the permission of the Graduate Dean. No more than four course units in any one term may be counted toward the minimum requirement of eight course units. No course may be counted toward degree requirements of more than two degrees at the University.

A prospective candidate for a Research Master's degree must complete at least four course units in the field of the major.

b. Transfer of Credit

Some Graduate Groups may allow for courses to be transferred from an approved program at another institution. No work done as an undergraduate, whether at this institution or at any other, will be counted toward a Ph.D., M.A., or M.S., with the following exception: graduate courses completed by undergraduates as submatriculants in a Graduate Group may be counted toward graduate degree requirements.

c. Research Requirement/Scholarly Paper/Thesis

All Research Master's students are required to complete a research requirement. This research requirement consists of 2 parts: 1) completing a research course or engaging in research supervised by the Graduate

Group, and 2) preparing a thesis or comprehensive scholarly report in the student's major field of study.

A thesis or comprehensive scholarly report based on joint work with other researchers is allowed, provided that, in such cases, a unique and separate document is presented by each degree candidate. The candidate must include a concise account of their contribution to the whole work. Authorship of a master's thesis or comprehensive scholarly report by more than one degree candidate is not allowed.

If a thesis is required, it must follow the format prescribed in the Master's Thesis Formatting Guide (<https://provost.upenn.edu/sites/default/files/users/user125/Research%20Masters%20Formatting%20Guide%20Final.pdf>). Students also should familiarize themselves with any special requirements of the Graduate Groups under which they are studying.

Some Graduate Groups require thesis deposit with the University; see Research Master's Thesis Deposit (<https://provost.upenn.edu/dissertation-deposit/>) for an up-to-date list. Theses are submitted electronically as of Spring 2020; hard copies are not required.

All Research Master's students who have completed their coursework and are solely on Master's thesis status are registered for thesis status courses. These courses will receive a mark of S (satisfactory progress) or U (unsatisfactory) at the end of each semester. The mark will be a reflection of the evaluation by the Graduate Group of the student's progress.

d. General Examination

A general examination by the Graduate Group in the major subject is required in addition to all other examinations. The purpose of this examination is to test the student's knowledge of their major subject in its broader aspects and proficiency in the particular courses the student has taken. This examination may be oral, written, or both, at the discretion of the Graduate Group. The mere satisfaction of minimum requirements does not entitle the student to be admitted to this examination.

The Graduate Group may substitute other assessment procedures for the general examination as a means of assuring that Master's students have broad knowledge of the field. Completion of this requirement – whether by general examination or other assessment procedures – must be documented by the Graduate Group for each Research Master's student.

e. Graduate Grades and Academic Standing

The grading system is as follows:

- A, excellent
- B, good
- C, fair
- D, poor but passing; and
- F, failure

At the graduate level, the grade of C, while passing, does not constitute satisfactory performance. Letter grades may be modified by a plus (+) or minus (-) sign at the discretion of the School. The minimum standard for satisfactory work for the Graduate Council of the Faculties is a B average in each academic year, but the Graduate Group may set additional requirements that determine advancement; these standards may require a student to withdraw despite a satisfactory grade average, if the quality of the student's work is not at a level that predicts successful Master's research.

The mark of S is used to indicate "satisfactory progress." The mark of U is used to indicate "unsatisfactory progress." The mark of I is used to designate "incomplete." Students who fail to complete a course and do not withdraw or change their status to auditor within the prescribed period shall receive, at the instructor's discretion, a grade of I (incomplete) or F (failure). It is expected, in general, that a student shall complete the work of a course during the term in which that course is taken. The instructor may permit an extension of time up to one year for the completion of the course. In such cases, any course which is still incomplete after one calendar year from its official ending will become a permanent incomplete on the student's record and shall not be credited toward a degree.

II. Registration

Registration takes place in the fall and spring semesters. A minimum of 1 course unit must be completed each semester for a Research Master's student to remain enrolled making progress, unless the student is on an approved leave of absence. Research Master's students who are candidates for an August degree remain full-time students through August 31st without summer registration.

III. Leaves of Absence

A student who wishes to take a leave of absence must submit a written request to their Graduate Group Chair for initial approval and then to the appropriate Graduate Dean for final approval.

IV. Enrolled Ph.D. Students earning a Research Master's Degree

The University allows currently enrolled Ph.D. students to earn a Research Master's degree en route ("in passing") to the Ph.D. in certain circumstances. The particular Research Master's degree available (M.A. or M.S.) depends on the Graduate Group, and it is within the Graduate Group's discretion to determine whether this option is available to its Ph.D. students. The student must apply to graduate with the Research Master's degree after completing the minimum Research Master's requirements; the degree is not automatically awarded. Ph.D. students who also earn a Research Master's degree must complete all requirements for the Research Master's degree, including the Research Requirement and General Examination, in addition to all requirements for the Ph.D. This option is only available to currently enrolled students, not retroactively.

Ph.D. students who are considering withdrawing from the Ph.D. program and wish to earn a Research Master's degree instead must complete all requirements for the Research Master's degree, apply to graduate, and be awarded the Research Master's degree before they withdraw from the University.

(Source: Almanac, July 16, 2024 (<https://almanac.upenn.edu/#of-record-academic-rules-for-research-masters-programs>))