Academic Information

General Requirements for Master of Arts (AM) Degrees

The minimum requirement of the Master of Arts degree (AM) is 30 credits. If the AM is awarded in a program of study in which Washington University awards a PhD with an identical disciplinary title, the minimum requirement is 36 credits.

Any master's degree program can require a master's thesis, make the thesis optional, or decline to offer a thesis. No more than 6 credits toward the AM can be awarded for master's thesis research. A master's thesis must be defended before a committee of no fewer than three faculty members. A master's without thesis must include an examination which tests competence in the field of study. Degree programs are free to add additional requirements. In addition, master's students must maintain satisfactory academic progress and fulfill residence requirements.

Registration

Students newly admitted to the Graduate School receive from the university registrar information on creating a WUSTL Key that is used to register for courses online via WebSTAC during open registration periods. All registrations require online approval by the student's faculty adviser and are monitored by the Graduate School.

Credit Hours

Full-time students register for 9-12 hours per semester. Master's students who have completed their courses and need additional time to complete other degree requirements will be registered for LGS 9000 Full-time Graduate Research/Study.

Courses

To count toward a master's degree, courses must be offered at the graduate level, taken for a grade, and approved in advance by the student's adviser and program as eligible to count toward the student's degree. Depending on the program, graduate-level courses begin with courses numbered in the 400s or 500s. Audited courses and courses taken pass/fail (or credit/no credit) cannot be counted toward the degree and may not be eligible for tuition remission. Students should consult their advisers regarding these options.

Grades

Credit-conferring grades for students in the Graduate School are these: A, outstanding; B, good; C, conditional (an A, B or C grade may be modified by a plus or minus); S, satisfactory; and U, unsatisfactory (used almost exclusively for credit hours earned by doing research). Other grades are F, failing; N, not submitted yet; X, final examination missed; and I, incomplete. The mark of I becomes a permanent part of the student's record after the lapse of one calendar year unless the program in which the mark was assigned requests an extension of time.

The Graduate School uses a 4-point scale for calculating grade point averages, with A = 4, B = 3, and C = 2. A plus adds .3 to the value of a grade, whereas a minus subtracts .3 from the value of a grade.

Retaking a Course

Graduate students may be allowed to retake a course once with prior permission from their department or program. The department can refuse the student's request. If permission to retake a course is granted, both registrations will show on the transcript. The grade for the first enrollment will always be replaced by the symbol R. Whether or not it is lower than or equal to the original grade, the grade for the second enrollment will be used to calculate the GPA. The grade for the first enrollment will not be replaced with an R until the second enrollment is completed and its grade has posted. A student who retakes a course without prior permission might not receive permission retroactively. No student may use the retake option to replace a grade received as a sanction for violation of the Academic Integrity Policy. The R option may be invoked only once per course, and the original grade option must be retained.

Transferred Credits

A maximum of 6 credit hours may ordinarily be transferred from an institution of recognized graduate standing toward fulfillment of requirements for the master's degree from Washington University, except that a maximum of 15 credit hours may be transferred toward fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts in Education (MAEd) from institutions that have entered into special cooperative agreements with Washington University for this purpose.

Applications to transfer credits for a master's degree are not ordinarily approved until one full semester of study (12 credit hours) has been completed at Washington University. Academic credits applied to complete requirements for the bachelor's degree are ordinarily not transferable toward the fulfillment of advanced degree requirements at Washington University. Likewise, academic credits counted toward requirements for any completed graduate degree are ordinarily not transferable toward a subsequent degree of equivalent or lower level.

Satisfactory Academic Progress

Satisfactory academic progress is monitored by the Graduate School as well as the degree program. Failure to maintain satisfactory academic progress may result in immediate dismissal or in placement on academic probation for the ensuing year. Most financial awards, and all federally funded awards, are contingent on the maintenance of satisfactory
academic progress. Moreover, satisfactory academic progress is a prerequisite for service on any committee authorized by the Graduate School. The following are minimal standards of satisfactory academic progress for master's students; degree programs may set stricter standards, but must not relax these.

1. Students are expected to proceed at a pace appropriate to enable them to finish within the time limits customary in their degree program. At most, students enrolled in master's degree programs have four calendar years, dated from their first registration in a graduate degree program at Washington University, to complete degree requirements.

2. Students are expected to maintain a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale in courses that count toward their credit hours. Thus, among courses of equal weight, each grade of C must be balanced by at least one A. (Note that plus and minus marks alter the numerical value of a letter grade.)

3. Students are expected not to carry at one time any more than 9 credit hours for which the grades of I (incomplete), X (final examination missed) or N (not yet submitted) are recorded. The Graduate School may deny a student with more than 9 unfinished credits permission to register.

Residence Requirement

The residence requirement for master's degree students is that each student must spend at least one academic year registered for full-time credits (9-12 in the fall followed by 9-12 in the spring) at Washington University. Any exceptions to this requirement must be approved by the dean of the Graduate School. All daytime programs prefer that students remain full-time and in residence throughout their work toward the degree.

Thesis

The thesis topic is subject to approval by the student's faculty adviser and by the chair of the degree program. As soon as the thesis topic has been approved, but no later than six months before the thesis defense is likely to occur, students should submit the Title, Scope and Procedure form (http://graduateschool.wustl.edu/forms-0) to the Graduate School. It must be signed by the three-member committee before whom the student will defend the thesis, and by the chair of the degree program. At least three members of the thesis committee must be Washington University faculty; at least two of them must be appointed in the student's degree program; and at least two of them (not necessarily the same two) must be tenured or tenure-track, including the committee chair or co-chair. Exceptions must be approved by the dean of the Graduate School or their designee.

A Master's Thesis Guide and a Template (http://graduateschool.wustl.edu/guides-0), which give instructions regarding the format of the thesis, are available on the Graduate School's website; both should be read carefully at every stage of thesis preparation.

The Graduate School requires each student to make the full text of the thesis available to the committee members for their review at least one week before the defense. Most degree programs require two or more weeks for the review period; students should check with their faculty.

After the defense, the student must submit an electronic copy of the thesis online to the Graduate School. The degree program is responsible for delivering the Master's Approval form, signed by the committee members at the defense and then by the program chair, to the Graduate School. Students who defend their theses successfully have not completed their master's requirements; they finish earning the degree only when their thesis submission has been accepted by the Graduate School.

Graduation Information

Students are responsible for filing an Intent to Graduate form in order to have their earned degree conferred. The Intent to Graduate is available online through WebSTAC (https://acadinfo.wustl.edu). Deadlines for filing an Intent to Graduate are listed on the Graduate School's website. No degree will be awarded if this form has not been filed. Students who do not complete their degree requirements by their intended graduation date must refile for the next graduation date.

Specific Circumstances

Changes in Program of Study

Students are usually admitted to the Graduate School to study toward specific degrees. Therefore, a change in the degree objective (e.g., from AM to PhD) is subject to the approval of the student's program and of the Graduate School. A request for a change in the subject of study (e.g., from economics to history) requires the approval of both programs concerned, as well as that of the Graduate School. Students may be required to fill out a new application for admission before making such changes, but they will not be charged a second application fee.

Student Grievance Procedures

From time to time, students may feel that they have legitimate complaints regarding academic matters or an interaction with a faculty member. It is important that students and faculty have a common understanding of how such complaints may be expressed and resolved. Students with complaints regarding academic matters should initially seek resolution from their faculty adviser, then from their director of graduate studies, and finally the chair of their degree program. Complaints which remain unresolved may be addressed to any of the deans in their school. The final court of appeal for all students in the Graduate School is the dean of the Graduate School.

All complaints regarding academic and professional integrity should be addressed to an associate dean of the Graduate School.
Washington University policies state that members of the university community can expect to be free from discrimination and harassment. Students, faculty, staff, and outside organizations working on campus are required to abide by specific policies prohibiting harassment.

An allegation of discrimination or harassment may be appealed to the vice chancellor for Human Resources, who will determine whether to convene the Title IX Grievance Committee to hear the case. Visit the Discrimination and Harassment (http://hr.wustl.edu/policies/pages/sexualharassment.aspx) webpage for more information.

Leaves of Absence

Students who wish to suspend their graduate study should apply for a leave of absence. A student’s application for a leave of absence must be endorsed by the degree program and then approved by the Graduate School.

Such a leave may be personal or medical. In the case of a medical leave the student must present authorization from Habif Health and Wellness Center at the beginning and again at the end of the leave. At the end of a leave of absence, a student is reinstated into the Graduate School under the conditions prevailing at the time the leave was granted. Being on leave suspends full-time student status and financial support from the university. Taking a leave therefore may adversely affect loan deferment, visa status, the right to rent university-owned housing, etc. Most visa types would prevent international students from remaining in the United States while taking a leave of absence; such students should consult the Office for International Students and Scholars (http://oiss.wustl.edu) as well as their faculty adviser, their program’s director of graduate studies, and perhaps a dean.

Prior to taking a leave of absence, students should consider their need for health insurance coverage. The continuation of student health insurance and access to Habif Health and Wellness Center depends on such factors as the kind of leave (medical or personal), the length of time the student has already been covered during the current insurance year, and the student’s location during the leave. Students should consult the Habif Health and Wellness Center (http://shs.wustl.edu) website for current policies with regard to leaves of absence; these policies may change annually if insurance carriers change.

Withdrawals

Students wishing to withdraw from their program must give notice in writing by filling out the Graduate School’s Withdrawal form (http://graduateschool.wustl.edu/forms-0). This form must include the date when the withdrawal should be considered effective. Without such information, there may be serious financial repercussions for the student and/or the university.

Dismissals

A program may wish to dismiss a student for a number of reasons: willful misrepresentation to gain admission to graduate study, breaches of academic integrity, academic failure, or behavior destructive of the welfare of the academic community. Dismissals are recommended by the degree program and are not final until approved by the Graduate School. Any student who believes their dismissal was undeserved may appeal to the dean of the Graduate School, who may accept or decline the program’s recommendation to dismiss the student.

Interdisciplinarity

Joint and Dual Degree Programs

The university has set up numerous programs permitting students to earn two graduate and/or professional degrees at the same time. Five of these programs include an AM degree:

- Joint Master of Social Work / Master of Arts in Jewish Studies
- Joint Master of Social Work / Master of Arts in Education
- Joint Master of Business Administration / Master of Arts in East Asian Studies
- Joint Juris Doctoris / Master of Arts in East Asian Studies
- Master’s Program for Medical Students (MD/AM in Biology & Biomedical Sciences)

The Graduate School uses the term “joint degree” to refer to programs in which no credit hours are counted toward both degrees. The Graduate School uses the term “dual degree” to refer to programs in which no credit hours are counted toward both degrees. Interested students must apply to and be admitted by each degree program separately, but ideally all applications should be made before beginning graduate or professional study. Joint and dual degrees are ordinarily conferred simultaneously, after all the requirements for both degrees have been met. For details of the programs listed above, students should consult the websites of the two disciplines.

Accelerated AB/AM Program

This program allows qualified Washington University undergraduates to complete a Master of Arts (AM) degree in a one-year accelerated program after completing the AB degree. The undergraduate and graduate degrees are awarded sequentially, with admission to the master’s degree, if approved, for the fall semester following completion of the undergraduate degree in the preceding December, May or August. The application deadline is August 1; applications may be submitted any time during the senior year up to the deadline. The GRE is not required. The program is available only to students currently in their senior year and only for continuous enrollment in the next year. There is no option for deferred admissions.
In order to complete an AM in one year, students may apply five courses taken at the 400 level or above as an undergraduate (with a maximum of 16 units) toward master's degree programs which require 36 or more units for completion. For master's programs which require fewer than 36 units, three courses at the 400 level or above (with a maximum of 12 units) may be applied. Master's programs requiring more than 36 units may require an additional semester or summer of enrollment. Undergraduate courses must be acceptable to the department or program offering the master's degree and must be completed with a final grade of B or higher. All admissions are provisional until the successful completion of the AB. Some departments may not participate in this program, and some departments that do not otherwise offer a master's degree may provide this opportunity to Washington University undergraduates. Please consult the home department and the Information for Accelerated AB/AM Applicants (PDF) for more detailed information.

Actual award of each degree is contingent on successful completion of all requirements for that degree. The application for admission must be made to the department, which forwards the application and the department’s recommendation for admission to the Graduate School. There is no application fee. Students accepted into the program will retain their student ID numbers and will not need to replace their ID cards. In every other respect, they will be treated as new students in the Graduate School and should familiarize themselves with the relevant sections of this Bulletin.