Academic Information

General Requirements for Master's Degrees in Arts & Sciences

The minimum requirement of the master's degree is 30 credits.

The master's degree program can require a master's thesis, make the thesis optional, or decline to offer a thesis. A thesis is always required for students who pursue a master's degree outside of their area of study for their intended PhD program. No more than 6 credits toward the terminal master's degree can be awarded for master's thesis research. No more than 15 units of master's thesis research may be applied to a master's degree earned en route to a PhD program. A master's thesis must be defended before a committee of no fewer than three faculty members. A master's degree without a thesis must include an examination that tests competence in the field of study. Degree programs are free to include additional requirements. Master's students must also maintain satisfactory academic progress and fulfill residence requirements.

Registration

Students newly admitted to graduate programs in Arts & Sciences receive information about creating a WUSTL Key (a university login identity credential) from the university registrar. The WUSTL Key is an account that is used to register for courses online via WebSTAC during open registration periods. All registrations require online approval by the student's faculty advisor and are monitored by the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences.

Credit Units

Full-time students register for 9 to 12 units 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 advisor and program as eligible to count toward the student's degree. Depending on the program, graduate-level courses are designated by numbers in the 400s or 500s. Audited courses and courses taken with the satisfactory/unsatisfactory or credit/no credit grading option cannot be counted toward the degree. Students should consult their advisors regarding these options.

Grades

Credit-conferring grades for students in Arts & Sciences are as follows: 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 (this is used almost exclusively for credit units 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 Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, uses a 4-point scale for calculating grade-point averages, with A = 4, B = 3, and C = 2. A plus adds 0.3 to the value of a grade, whereas a minus subtracts 0.3 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 grade-point average. 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 units may ordinarily be transferred from an institution of recognized graduate standing toward the fulfillment of requirements for the master's degree from Washington University, except that a maximum of 15 credit units may be transferred toward the 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 units) 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.
Shared Credits With the PhD

The doctorate-granting department will determine a standardized practice to identify which courses will count toward the doctoral degree. Departments will demonstrate consistency with regard to which and how many units will apply from each master’s discipline.

Satisfactory Academic Progress

Satisfactory academic progress is monitored by the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, as well as by the degree program. Failure to maintain satisfactory academic progress may result in immediate dismissal or in placement on academic probation for a minimum of three months. 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 Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences. 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 units. (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 units for which the grades of I (incomplete), X (final examination missed), or N (not yet submitted) are recorded. The Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, 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 to 12 credits in the fall followed by 9 to 12 credits in the spring) at Washington University. Any exceptions to this requirement must be approved by the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences. 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 master's faculty advisor 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 (https://gradstudies.artsci.wustl.edu/forms/) to the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences. It must be signed by the three-member committee before whom the student will defend the thesis as well as 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 master'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 Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, or their designee.

A Master’s Thesis Guide and a template (https://gradstudies.artsci.wustl.edu/forms/) that provide instructions regarding the format of the thesis are available on the website of the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences; both should be read carefully at every stage of thesis preparation.

The Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, 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 Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences via BePress at the university library. The degree program is responsible for delivering the Master’s Thesis Approval form (PDF) (http://bulletin.wustl.edu/grad/gsas/masters/academic/Master_s_Final_Approval_Form_thesis_2020.pdf), signed by the committee members at the defense and then by the program chair, to the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences. Students who defend their theses successfully have not yet completed their master's requirements; they finish earning the degree only when their thesis submission has been accepted by the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences.

Graduation Information

Students are responsible for filing an Intent to Graduate form in order to have their earned master's degree conferred. The Intent to Graduate form is available online through WebSTAC (https://acadinfo.wustl.edu). Deadlines for filing an Intent to Graduate are listed on the website of the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences (https://gradstudies.artsci.wustl.edu/). 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 graduate programs in Arts & Sciences to study toward specific degrees. Therefore, a change in the degree objective (e.g., from AM to PhD) is subject to the approval of both the student's program and the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences. 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 Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences. 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 advisor, then from their director of graduate studies, and finally from the chair of their degree program. Complaints that remain unresolved may be addressed to any of the deans in a student’s school. The final arbiter for all such complaints in Arts & Sciences is the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences.

All complaints regarding academic and professional integrity should be addressed to the Office of the Vice Provost of Graduate Education.

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 page (https://hr.wustl.edu/items/discrimination-harassment-policy/) 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 Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences.

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 both the beginning and end of the leave. At the end of a leave of absence, a student is reinstated into the School of Arts & Sciences 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 may therefore adversely affect loan deferment, visa status, the right to rent university-owned housing, and so on. 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 (https://students.wustl.edu/international-students-scholars/) as well as their faculty advisor, their program's director of graduate studies, and the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences.

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 (https://students.wustl.edu/habif-health-wellness-center/) 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 programs must give notice in writing by filling out the withdrawal form available on the Forms page (https://gradstudies.artsci.wustl.edu/forms/) of the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, where it can be found under the "Change to Enrollment Status" heading. This form must include the date upon which the withdrawal should be considered effective. Without such information, there may be serious financial repercussions for the student and/or the university. International students should absolutely contact their advisors in the Office for International Students and Scholars before taking this action so they can understand all potential visa and student status implications.

**Dismissals**

A program may wish to dismiss a student for a number of reasons, including willful misrepresentation to gain admission to graduate study, breaches of academic integrity, academic failure, or behavior destructive to the welfare of the academic community. Dismissals are recommended by the degree program and are not final until approved by the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences. Any student who believes their dismissal was undeserved may appeal to the Vice Dean of the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences. Within 90 days of the decision, an appeal must be initiated. An appeal is a formal request for a review of the decision by the degree program, the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, and the Graduate Council. Appeals may be filed only on the ground that the dismissal was arbitrarily or unreasonably inflicted. Exceptions to this rule are made for circumstances justifying immediate dismissal, a student cannot be dismissed on the basis of academic performance without the opportunity to return to good standing during an identified period of probation.

For details of these or any other policies of the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, please visit the Policies & Procedures page (https://gradstudies.artsci.wustl.edu/graduate-school-policies-and-procedures/).
Interdisciplinarity

Joint and Dual Degree Programs

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

- Joint Master of Social Work / Master of Arts in Education
- Juris Doctoris / Master of Arts in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

The Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, uses the term joint degree to refer to programs in which one or more credit units are counted toward both degrees. The Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, uses the term dual degree to refer to programs in which no credit units 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 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

The Accelerated AB/AM program allows qualified Washington University undergraduates to complete a Master of Arts (AM) degree in a one-year accelerated program after completing a Bachelor of Arts (AB) degree. The undergraduate and graduate degrees are awarded sequentially, with admission to the master's degree program, if approved, occurring during the fall semester following the completion of the undergraduate degree during the preceding December, May or August. The application deadline is March 15; applications may be submitted at 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 the next year. There is no option for deferred admissions.

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 that require 36 or more units for completion. For master's programs that 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 that require 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.

The actual awarding of each degree is contingent on the 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 Arts & Sciences. 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 Arts & Sciences and should familiarize themselves with the relevant sections of this Bulletin.