Regulations for Master’s Programs

Description
Although programs leading to a master's degree are very diverse, they generally fall into two categories depending on overall emphasis and the nature of the culminating activity. Scholarly programs emphasize research or creative activities and require a thesis that is defended formally in a public setting and made publicly accessible through the university archive. Professional programs emphasize the application of advanced knowledge and skills and require a project, capstone course, series of practicums, recital, or comprehensive examination. Both scholarly and professional master's programs involve substantial study beyond the baccalaureate degree, impart the methodology of discovery or creation in a given discipline, and prepare students to contribute at an advanced level to the workplace and to the community.

Degree Requirements
Advisor or Supervisory Committee A student admitted to a master's program must be under the guidance of either a supervisory committee or an advisor appointed soon after admission; see Guidance of Graduate Students in the Graduate Academic Regulations section of this catalog.

Credit Requirements The program of study leading to a master’s degree must include at least 30 total credits. All credit applied to meet the total credit requirement must be graduate academic credit except that a limited number of credits earned in undergraduate courses outside the major are allowed (see Restrictions on Certain Courses below). In all cases, at least two thirds of the total credit requirement must be earned at Boise State University since admission to the program. All credit must be approved for application by the chair of the supervisory committee or the advisor.

Language Proficiency A master’s student must be proficient in English and may be required to demonstrate a prescribed level of ability in one or more other languages. If language ability beyond proficiency in English is required, the means of verification are defined by the academic unit responsible for the program.

Culminating Activity The program of study leading to a master’s degree must include at least one culminating activity that may be a thesis, project, portfolio, capstone course, series of practicums, performance recital or lecture recital, or comprehensive examination. The culminating activity or activities should be represented in the program by nonzero credit but cannot exceed one third of the total credit requirement. Exceptions to the culminating activity requirement can only be made on a programmatic basis and must be approved by the Graduate Council.

Final Oral Examination A student enrolled in a master’s program with a thesis requirement must pass a final oral examination that probes his or her ability to describe and defend all aspects of the thesis in both a public setting and a private conference with experts (see Final Oral Examination below).

Duration of Graduate Study The minimum duration of study for the master’s degree is one academic year after admission to the program. All requirements for a master’s degree (including courses completed at another college or university) must be started and completed within a single continuous interval of no more than seven years.

Restrictions on Certain Courses
All master’s programs must be consistent with the following restrictions. An academic unit responsible for a particular master’s program may impose more stringent restrictions for that program.

Undergraduate Courses An undergraduate course may be applied to meet the credit requirements of a master’s degree subject to the following restrictions:
1. The course must be an upper–division course and must be in a discipline outside the major field of study of the master’s program.
2. A grade of B or better must be earned in the course.
3. The course cannot represent effort for an undergraduate thesis, internship, practicum, independent study or research, conference or workshop, experiential learning, study abroad, seminar, or colloquium.

Previously Applied Courses In general, any course applied to a previously earned degree of any type at any institution cannot be applied to meet the credit requirements of a master’s program. The only exception is a course that qualifies for application under regulations for a second master’s degree at Boise State University (see Second Master’s Degree below) or an accelerated master’s degree. Each course allowed under this exception is subject to the following additional restrictions:
1. A grade of B or better must have been earned in the course.
2. The course cannot represent effort for a graduate culminating activity or for experiential learning.

Courses allowed under this exception are also limited by any stipulations that apply to the requirements for second master’s degrees and accelerated master’s degrees.

Aggregate Restriction No more than one third of the total credit requirement exclusive of culminating activity credit can be met by the sum of credits earned in undergraduate courses, pass-fail courses, and university-wide courses numbered 590, 594-598, and 696-697 (or equivalent courses that may appear as transfer credits).

Thesis
A thesis documents original research or creative activity carried out by a student enrolled in a master’s program. A research thesis is characterized by a clearly stated proposition or hypothesis that is investigated using analysis and synthesis of data or other scholarly evidence; the thesis must include a discussion of the relevant literature and demonstrate the ability of the student to independently and successfully address a significant intellectual problem with concepts and methods that are accepted in the major field of study. A creative thesis includes works of fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction and is associated with the Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing program.

Thesis Proposal A thesis proposal must be approved in advance by the supervisory committee. The thesis proposal presents the background, objectives, scope, methods, and time lines of the thesis research. Substantive work done by the student prior to the appointment of the supervisory committee or work represented by credit other than 593 Thesis (such as 596 Independent Study and 696 Directed Research) is not acceptable for the thesis under any conditions.