

III: Moving through the Program

1. Program Requirements

To earn an M.A., students must complete at least 36 hours (12 courses) of graduate-level work and pass two comprehensive exams. Students may elect to write a thesis, in which case up to 6 of the 36 hours may be devoted to research and writing. Two-thirds (24 credit hours) of the degree program, including the thesis for students taking that option, must be completed in residence at UM-St. Louis. Students should, if at all possible, take the graduate Proseminar during the first Fall semester in which they are in residence. In addition, the courses taken are subject to two distribution requirements:

- A. At least half the courses must be at the 5000 level.
- B. At least one course (3 credit hours) must be chosen from each of the following four subject areas:
 - Epistemology/Metaphysics
 - History of Philosophy
 - Logic/Philosophy of Science
 - Value Theory (ethics, aesthetics, social and political philosophy, philosophy of law)

The comprehensive exams are taken in two of these four areas.

2. Progress to the Degree

Our students vary considerably in how they progress through the program. Some work full time and take only one course a semester; others charge through as quickly as possible. The Graduate School declares 9 credit hours (3 courses) to be the “minimum full-time course load” for a regular semester. We in fact find this reasonable as a **maximum** course load; taking more courses in a given semester could leave you spread too thin.

3. Taking Courses at SLU

A cooperative arrangement allows our Master’s students to take up to 4 graduate philosophy courses at St. Louis University while paying UMSL tuition and fees. The strengths of the SLU Philosophy Department – history of philosophy and philosophy of religion – nicely complement those of our program. We ask that students not avail themselves of this arrangement until after their first semester of study. And in any given semester, they must take at least half their courses at UMSL.

To register for a graduate course at SLU, first contact the instructor, introduce yourself, and make sure there is room. Then get the requisite forms from Candy Cromwell in the Registrar’s Office, 351 MSC (Millenium Student Center).

4. Comprehensive Exams

Comprehensive exams must be passed in 2 of the 4 subject areas:
-- history of philosophy

- value theory
- philosophy of science/logic
- epistemology/metaphysics

After you've taken a few courses, you should start thinking about which areas to choose for your comps. Study questions are available from the Graduate Director for each of the exams. The exams themselves will present a subset of those study questions, from which you will select a smaller subset on which to write. Each essay is graded – High Pass, Pass, or Fail -- and you must pass all the questions in order to pass the exam. If you do fail some of the questions, you can 'bank' your passing answers and try again to write whatever number of questions you still owe.

In past semesters, students have formed study groups to work through the questions in the question sets. Some students found those groups among their most rewarding graduate experiences. Though there is a danger of having only a 'Cliff Notes' take on each topic. One important caution in scheduling comps: be sure to leave enough time before your anticipated graduation to take the requisite exams, have them graded, return for any rewrites, and get the proper forms to the Graduate School before their announced deadlines (see section 5 below on M forms).

5. M-Forms; What They are and When They're Due

As you progress through your graduate career, you will have to fill out and file a series of Graduate School forms. They're all coded "M" for Master's, and can be found on the Forms section of the Graduate School website:

<http://www.umsl.edu/divisions/graduate/formsregs/mastforms.html>

The (M-1) Program for Master's Degree form should be filed during the first 2/3's of your degree program (but when you know the courses you're likely to take to complete the degree).

The M-4) Application for Master's Degree form must be filed by the 4th week of classes in the semester in which you intend to graduate.

The remaining 3 forms – (M-2) Appointment of thesis committee, (M-3) Preliminary Approval of Master's Thesis, and (M-5) Final Approval of Master's Thesis, all pertain to the thesis option.

NB – The Graduate School operates with real world deadlines! There is little or no wiggle room, and missing some of these deadlines can scuttle your graduation plans. Nora will send out timely reminders, but ultimately it is your responsibility to stay on top of these requirements.