

MA Exams: Advice on Procedures

MA Exam (Non-thesis Option)

Form a three person committee

- Student selects a chair for the master's non-thesis exam committee
- In consultation with that chair, student selects two other graduate faculty members for the committee
- Student must notify the Graduate Director in writing of his/her selection of a faculty member as the chair of the committee
- Unless special arrangements are made, two of the committee members should be Political Science Department faculty

Composition of the exam

- The chair of the student's committee composes the MA exam, including two of his/her own questions as well as two questions from each of the other committee members
- The exam will be compiled one week before exam date
- Student selects the date for the written exam keeping in mind space availability of conference room and deadlines for notification to College/Graduate School to ensure graduation
- Student must notify the Graduate Coordinator two weeks before the written exam that the exam is to take place
- The Graduate Coordinator will verify that the student has taken (or is currently enrolled in) all required coursework
- The Graduate Coordinator will submit forms to notify the College/Graduate School of the exam

Administration of the written exam

- The Graduate Coordinator administers the exam in-class
- Student answers one question from each professor on the committee, for a total of three
- A maximum of four hours is allowed for the written exam
- Exams will be written by hand, unless student requests we make available a computer on which the answers may be typed

Grading of the written exam

- Committee members have at least one week to grade the exam
- A pass/fail decision is made by majority rule of the committee members

- Pass/fail votes may be collected during a meeting of the committee or through a mail ballot
- If the committee indicates a failing grade, a meeting will be held to discuss the advice that should be given to the student
- The chair of the committee must notify the Graduate Coordinator in writing of the outcome of the exam as soon as the student is notified

Oral exam

- The oral exam should be scheduled within two weeks of passing the written exams
- The chair should schedule the oral exam in consultation with the two other faculty members, the student, and the Graduate Coordinator
- The Graduate Coordinator submits forms to notify the College/Graduate School that a comprehensive oral exam is scheduled
- The committee will decide by majority rule if the result of the oral exam is a pass or fail
- The chair must notify the Graduate Coordinator in writing of the outcome of the oral exam, and sign the required forms

Time frame

- The exam may take place at any time selected by the student and chair
- Student must file an Application for Degree before the deadline set by the University and
- Complete the oral exam before the deadlines set by the University

Example schedule

- March 10: Notify the Graduate Coordinator that a written exam is scheduled
- March 17: Committee chair compiles six exam questions
- March 24: Written exam administered to student
- March 30: Student and Graduate Coordinator notified of passing result on written exam
- March 30: Student/Chair/Graduate Coordinator schedule oral exam
- March 30: Student submits Application for Degree before April 1 deadline
- April 14: Oral exam
- April 14: Notify Graduate Director/Graduate Coordinator of exam result.

(Special thanks to Professor Sharon O'Brien for formalizing this list.)

MA Exam (Thesis Option)

Form a three person committee

- Student selects a chair for the master's thesis exam committee
- In consultation with that chair, student selects two other graduate faculty members for the committee
- Student must notify the Graduate Director in writing of his/her selection of a faculty member as chair of the committee
- Unless special arrangements are made, two of the committee members should be Political Science Department faculty

Schedule on oral exam

- When the final draft of the thesis is considered sufficient to the chair of the committee, the Graduate Coordinator must be given two weeks' notice that an oral exam is to be held
- The Graduate Coordinator will submit forms notifying the College/Graduate School that an oral exam is scheduled
- The committee will decide by majority rule whether the exam is a pass or fail
- The chair must inform the Graduate Coordinator in writing of the outcome of the oral exam and sign the required forms

Time frame

- The exam may take place at any time agreed upon by the student and the chair
- Student must file Application for Degree before the deadline set by the University and
- Complete the oral exam before the deadline set by the University