

University of Utah

Master of Science Programs in Parks, Recreation, and Tourism

**A Student Guide for the Successful Planning and
Fulfillment of a Graduate Degree in the
Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism.**

*Please retain this copy and utilize it to plan your graduate courses and
activities.*

**Revised and Updated
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

MASTER OF SCIENCE PROGRAM	2
DESCRIPTION	2
TRANSFER CREDITS AND CREDIT/NO CREDIT	4
VARIATIONS FROM PRESCRIBED PRT CORE COURSES	4
NON-NATIVE SPEAKERS OF ENGLISH	4
SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE	4
MASTER’S DEFENSES AND EXAMINATIONS	4
Non-Thesis Students: Written Comprehensive Examination	4
Non-Thesis Students: Practicum and Project Requirements and Defenses	5
Thesis Students: Proposal Defense and Final Oral Examination	7
Proposal	7
Final Oral Examination	7
TIME LIMIT	8
LEAVES OF ABSENCE	8
CHECKLIST OF STEPS FOR COMPLETING THE MASTERS DEGREE	8
MS THESIS EVALUATION CRITERIA	10

MASTER OF SCIENCE PROGRAM

DESCRIPTION

Students working toward a Master of Science degree can pursue a thesis (research) track or a non-thesis (professional) track. The research track is best suited to individuals who intend to pursue advanced studies beyond the master’s degree. The professional option is intended for students who are anticipating an administrative or professional position and who are interested in extending the scope of their studies in the discipline accordingly.

Students can develop specialized knowledge in the following areas: Community Parks and Recreation, Experiential Education, Natural Resource Management, Therapeutic Recreation, Adventure and Outdoor Programs, and Sustainable Tourism.

MS Thesis Option Curriculum

Cr. Hours

7	<u>Parks, Recreation, & Tourism Core</u>
3	PRT 6000, History and Philosophy of PRT
3	PRT 6030, Seminar in Management and Facilitation of Recreation Experiences
1	PRT 6800, Graduate Seminar
15	<u>Research Core</u>
3	PRT 6010, Behavioral Science Foundations of PRT
3	PRT 7102, Introduction to Research Methods
3	3 hours of statistics (PRT/ESS 7103) or equivalent research tools course
6	PRT 6970, Thesis Research
14	<u>Specialization</u> Area of Specialization Negotiated with supervisory committee (up to 50% can be approved by advisor)
36	Total

MS Non-Thesis Option Curriculum

Cr. Hours

7	<u>Parks, Recreation, & Tourism Core</u>
2	PRT 6000, History and Philosophy of PRT
3	PRT 6030, Seminar in Management and Facilitation of Recreation Experiences
1	PRT 6800, Graduate Seminar
6	<u>Research Core</u>
3	PRT 6010, Behavioral Science Foundations of PRT
3	PRT/ESS 6550, Interpreting Research
8	<u>Capstone Experience</u> PRT 6860/6861, Graduate Practicum (Must contain service learning & a significant project)
15	<u>Specialization</u> Area of Specialization Negotiated with supervisory committee (up to 50% can be approved by advisor)
36	Total

TRANSFER CREDITS AND CREDIT/NO CREDIT

A maximum of 6 semester hours may be transferred from another institution, subject to the approval of the student's graduate supervisory committee. With the exception of PRT 6800, no classes using the credit/no credit option may be applied toward a master's degree.

VARIATIONS FROM PRESCRIBED PRT CORE COURSES

While the core courses are generally considered mandatory for graduate students, under rare circumstances deviations from this recommended sequence may be approved by students' supervisory committees.

NON-NATIVE SPEAKERS OF ENGLISH

All individuals who are admitted to graduate study in the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism and who are non-native speakers of English are required to complete the English "Placement Examination" that is offered through the English Language Institute and to complete the courses that are recommended based on the results of that test.

SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE

Master of Science students' supervisory committees consist of three members. The chair and one other committee member must be from the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism. The third member represents the student's area of concentration. Recommendations by the student for committee members are subject to the approval of the director of graduate studies or the chair of the Department. The committee chair and the majority of the members must be tenure-line or graduate faculty at the University of Utah.

MASTER'S DEFENSES AND EXAMINATIONS

Students who select the thesis option complete an oral defense of the thesis, but are not required to take a written examination. Students who choose the non-thesis option are required to take a written comprehensive examination, but are not required to take an oral examination.

Non-Thesis Students: Written Comprehensive Examination

Comprehensive examinations may be held only between August 15 and May 15 since many faculty members are only on 9 month contracts and are not available during the summer months.

The purpose of the comprehensive examination is to assess the ability of students to synthesize concepts and knowledge gained through course work in a context of particular situations, problems, or professional issues. Students must attain a mark of "acceptable" on each question to pass the exam.

1. Comprehensive examinations should be taken during the semester in which the student is within 6 credit hours of completing all required course work.
2. The student works with the Department Administrative Officer to plan the examination. The student presents a transcript of academic work to date to the Administrative Officer and selects an examination date that is at least five weeks in the future. The Administrative Officer requests questions from each member of the student's graduate supervisory committee.
3. Students have three weeks to complete the exam. Exams are to be picked up from and returned to the Department Administrative Officer. During that three week period, students may draw on any resources available to them to address questions, but the responses must be their own work, with appropriate reference citations.
4. All responses must be typed and two copies of each response must be submitted. APA editorial style must be followed on all responses unless otherwise noted.
5. Student responses to each question will be evaluated by the individual who submitted the question. Feedback to the student will include narrative comments and a global rating of acceptable/unacceptable. This global rating will represent a composite of each evaluator's judgments concerning the effectiveness of the student's synthesis of concepts of knowledge.
6. Students may schedule a meeting with the chair of their supervisory committee to discuss faculty feedback from their comprehensive examinations. Alternately, feedback may be given directly by individual committee members.
7. Students will rewrite all questions that receive an "unacceptable" rating. They will have one week to do so. If the student fails to make an acceptable rating for each question on the second examination, the student's supervisory committee shall meet to determine the appropriate course of action to be followed. Examples of actions which might be recommended by the committee include additional or remedial course work followed by a third examination, an oral examination, or discontinuation of the student's involvement in the program. The specific recommendation will be determined by the student's needs and circumstances, as perceived by the supervisory committee.

Non-Thesis Students: Practicum and Project Requirements and Defenses

Professional practicum experiences play a pivotal role in professional track master's degree programs. These experiences provide a forum through which students may demonstrate their mastery of specific content related to their studies. These experiences require students to complete an 8 credit hour practicum in a parks, recreation, or tourism related organization. During that practicum experience, to make a contribution to the sponsoring agency that represents the student's area of special expertise as a separate, tangible project.

This project is to be completed after consultation with the student's supervisory committee chair. A detailed description of the project must be provided to the other committee members for approval prior to beginning the project. The objective of these projects is to improve services and/or knowledge for a sponsoring agency/organization by contributing a product, plan, technique, device, or procedure that has resulted from the student's studies in her or his area of special expertise. The project will be of sufficient quality to add to the body of knowledge in Parks, Recreation, and Tourism or to provide a new resource to a sponsoring organization.

Master's students are expected to be adept at reading and synthesizing contemporary literature, research, and theory. Therefore, master's projects are expected to be informed by suitable evidence on a given topic. For many projects the evidence will come from the current state of knowledge on their topics, often in the form of a comprehensive literature review. Other projects will necessitate the collection and analysis of primary data. Regardless of the sources of evidence used, it is expected that students will ground their projects via germane literature, theory, research, and/or data. Projects commonly follow one of three formats:

Option A: Grounded primarily via existing literature, research, and theory

- Chapter 1: Explanation of the problem that the project intends to address
- Chapter 2: Synthesis of the existing literature relevant to the problem
- Chapter 3: Recommendations and action items that follow from chapter 2
- The Project Itself. The project itself may take many forms. Examples include: A risk management plan, a targeted curriculum, a smart phone application, a website redesign, or developing an assessment system.
- References and Appendices

Option B: Grounded primarily via the collection, analysis, and interpretation of primary data

- Chapter 1: Explanation of the problem that the project intends to address.
- Chapter 2: Synthesis of the existing literature relevant to the problem. This chapter is typically shorter than for option A.
- Chapter 3: Explanation of data collection, data analysis, and summary of results.
- Chapter 4: Recommendations and action items that follow from Chapter 3. Note that in this format, the data collection, analysis, and interpretation typically represent the project itself.
- References and Appendices

Option C: Grounded Through a Combination of Literature, Research, Theory, and Evaluation Data

- Chapter 1: Explanation of the problem that the project intends to address
- Chapter 2: Synthesis of the existing literature relevant to the problem. This chapter is typically shorter than for option A and often ends in a summary of why the project activity should take the form it does in the next chapter.
- Chapter 3: Explanation of the project activity. The project activity may take many forms. Examples include: Running a recreational program of some type (event, trip, community program), implementing a marketing campaign, or testing an intervention.
- Chapter 4: Data collection, analysis, and recommendations for improvement that follow from an evaluation effort.

- References and Appendices

Before students receive grades for their practicum and project hours, they must formally present their projects to their supervisory committee. In addition, students are encouraged to formally present their projects to the agency or organization. Final copies of the project should be distributed to the supervisory committee members a minimum of one week before the scheduled presentation. Final presentations may be scheduled, subject to committee members' availability, during the fall and spring semesters and should be scheduled before the last day of the semester in which they plan to graduate.

THESIS STUDENTS: PROPOSAL DEFENSE AND FINAL ORAL EXAMINATION

Developing a thesis topic and conducting research is a multi-step process. It is important to begin the process early.

Proposal defenses and final oral examinations may be held only between August 15 and May 15 since many faculty members are only on 9 month contracts and are not available during the summer months.

Proposal

The initial defense is of the thesis proposal to the student's supervisory committee. This is a formal defense and as such, a polished proposal and professional quality presentation should be the standard. Copies of the thesis proposal must be in the hands of the student's supervisory committee a minimum of two weeks before the proposal defense. Proposals must meet the standards for theses and dissertations as presented in Appendix A of the Department's Graduate Bulletin.

Final Oral Examination

The second defense is of the final thesis itself. When the student and the supervisory committee consider the thesis to be complete, the supervisory committee will conduct the final oral examination of the thesis. This is the final formal defense and as such, a polished proposal and professional quality presentation should be the standard. Copies of the thesis must be in the hands of the student's supervisory committee a minimum of two weeks before the final defense. Theses must meet the standards for theses and dissertations as presented in Appendix A of the Graduate Bulletin.

During the defenses, students, faculty, or other interested parties may be in attendance. However, only those who have read the document may ask questions during the defense. Defenses must be open to the public and publicly announced two weeks prior to the defense date; an electronic version of the document must also be made available at this time.

TIME LIMIT

All requirements for the Master of Science degree must be completed within four consecutive calendar years. Students who do not complete their degrees in that time period may be dropped from the program or they may be required to complete additional course work and a qualifying examination. Formal requests for extension of this time period must be made through a written proposal to the graduate faculty within the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism. Proposals must include (1) a statement of commitment to completion of the program, (2) a detailed plan of how the program will be completed, and, (3) a time line of tasks to be completed. The plan for extension should be limited to a one year period of time. Only in rare circumstances will plans that exceed one calendar year be approved.

LEAVES OF ABSENCE

Except for the summer semester, Master of Science students must maintain continuous enrollment in consecutive semesters until their degrees are completed. Leave of absence requests must be made during the semester that precedes the semester during which the student intends to be absent and the student must be enrolled during that semester.

CHECKLIST OF STEPS FOR COMPLETING THE MASTERS DEGREE

- [] 1. Receive letter of acceptance to the graduate program from the University Admissions Office.
- [] 2. Prior to registration for classes, consult the director of graduate studies or your assigned academic advisor for initial direction related to content awareness, matriculation status, and courses to be taken the first semester.
- [] 3. Establish supervisory committee and complete the program of study form, **"Supervisory Committee and Program of Study"*** before completing 50% of your area of specialization courses. The student must circulate this form to his or her supervisory committee at least one week in advance of the scheduled committee meeting. Submit two copies of the completed form, with committee members' initials indicating their willingness to serve and their approval of your program of study, to the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism administrative officer or the director of graduate studies.

No more than 9 hours of non-matriculated course work may appear on the "Program of Study" form and all classes must be numbered 5000 or higher. No content awareness development status courses may appear on this document and up to six semester hours of transfer credit may be accepted by students' supervisory committees if "A" or "B" grades were received for that work.

- [] 4a. If a non-thesis option is chosen, arrange with Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism administrative officer for dates to take written qualifying examinations. This

step should be completed after consultation with supervisory committee chair during the last semester of class work. Passed exams will be entered into the graduate tracking system by the Department Administrative Officer or the Director of Graduate Studies. Note: arranging a qualifying examination date initiates submission of your official program of study to the graduate school.

- [] 4b. The final project must be presented in PRT 6800 or at another time to the committee. Once approved, notify the Department Administrative Office so that your final examination approval is entered.
- [] 5a. Thesis students should consult the *Handbook for Theses and Dissertations* available from the Thesis Office, before beginning to write their proposal.**
- [] 5b. If the thesis option is chosen, secure approval of thesis proposal at supervisory committee meeting.
- [] 5c. If the thesis option is chosen and data collection from human subjects is required to complete the proposed study, obtain institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for the thesis study. This process can take two or more months and requires on-line training prior to submission.
- [] 5d. After the research study is complete and deemed ready for defense by the committee chair, the meeting must be scheduled and announced to the public. The thesis document must be made available in advance to all interested parties.
- [] 5e. If the thesis option is chosen, complete thesis research and successfully defend the thesis before the student's supervisory committee and graduate faculty within the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism. Passed defenses will be entered into the graduate tracking system by the Department Administrative Officer or the Director of Graduate Studies upon notification by the student and his/her chair. Note: passing of the final defense also initiates submission of your official program of study to the graduate school.
- [] 5f. If the thesis option is chosen, pass the final oral examination. Submit the following forms to the Thesis Office:

Supervisory Committee Approval and Final Reading Approval** It is often best to take copies of these forms to your final thesis defense. At least one copy of the forms needs to be signed.

Permission to Quote Copyrighted Material and Multiple Author Release** (if necessary)

Note: A thesis release from the thesis office is required for graduation.

- [] 5g. If the thesis option is chosen, submit a list of the semesters in which you were enrolled for thesis hours (PRT 6970) to the chair of your supervisory committee to enable him or her to remove "T" grades for those hours. The student's supervisory committee will be responsible for assigning grades for these hours.
- [] 5h. Following completion of the thesis, the student and his or her supervisory committee chair are expected to co-author a professional journal article and/or abstract. This professional paper must be submitted for publication. Publication of the professional paper, however, is not required for the degree. A copy of the professional paper, along with submission date and title of publication, is to be placed on file with the director of graduate studies.
- [] 6. All students are required to complete an application for graduation the semester before they intend to graduate. (<http://registrar.utah.edu/graduation/index.php>)

* Available at MS or Doctoral Program pages: <http://www.health.utah.edu/parks-recreation-tourism/degrees/index.php>

**Thesis Office Forms are available at <http://www.gradschool.utah.edu/thesis/>

MS THESIS EVALUATION CRITERIA

- The conceptualization, method and design of the research must be of acceptable quality as a scientific or scholarly endeavor, as judged by the majority of members of the student's supervisory committee.
- The thesis research need not be original. Research that is a replication or extension of a previous study is appropriate for a thesis as long as the rationale for completing the study is compelling.
- Action or applied research may be completed for a thesis if the rationale is compelling.
- Supervisory committees will decide on the grade that should be awarded for the 6 thesis credits as part of their deliberations at students' defenses.
- Reviews of the history of investigation in the students' area of inquiry must be included as part of the literature review, along with evaluation of seminal works in that area.
- The literature review must be characterized by synthesis and evaluation. It must also conclude with statements of assumptions, propositions, and hypotheses to guide the investigation.
- Fundamentally, the difference between the thesis and dissertation is one of outcome rather than process. While dissertation research is expected to produce unique contributions to theory-based knowledge, thesis research may verify or extend existing knowledge or may inform applied research problems.