

# **Master of Science Programs in Parks, Recreation, and Tourism**

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



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## PREFACE

Welcome to the PRT graduate program at the University of Utah! Working on a graduate degree can be a challenging yet rewarding experience. We look forward to working with you!

This handbook addresses questions which, in our experience, are frequently asked by graduate students. Included are basic policies and procedures for the department, as well as graduate curricula and degree requirements. However, it may not include all of the information you may find valuable throughout your time as a graduate student at the University of Utah. It is important that you also check information provided by the Graduate School (<https://gradschool.utah.edu/graduate-students/>), including questions you may have about graduate school policies, financial resources, events and opportunities, and a variety of support services.

The information provided in this handbook are not intended to supersede policies or requirements outlined by the Graduate School. Should discrepancies arise, please bring them to the attention of the Director of Graduate Studies. Please retain this copy and utilize it to plan your graduate courses and activities.

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## **MASTER OF SCIENCE PROGRAM**

### **Degree Descriptions and Distinctions**

Parks, Recreation and Tourism offers either a thesis (research) or non-thesis (professional) preparation program. 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.

Our faculty support interests under a comprehensive research theme; Healthy Communities and Environments. Students can pursue research in areas relating to youth and family development and well-being, sustainable tourism and natural resource management, leisure for health and well-being, and outdoor recreation studies.

### **Degree Objectives**

- Graduates with Master's degrees should be capable of effectively speaking and writing about the PRT profession and related research.
- Graduates of the MS program should be capable of effectively using contemporary research, theory, and literature to address concerns and issues faced by the parks, recreation, and tourism field.
- Graduates with Master's degrees should be professionally prepared to assume supervisory level positions in parks, recreation, and tourism professions.
- Graduates with Master's degrees should be sufficiently prepared to benefit from advanced studies at the doctoral level.

### **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 English Speakers**

All individuals who are admitted to graduate study in PRT 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. The majority of the members including the chair must be tenure-line or graduate faculty at the University of Utah. Recommendations by the student for committee members are subject to the approval of the director of graduate studies or chair of PRT.

## REQUIRED COURSES & CREDIT HOURS

### MS Thesis Option Curriculum

#### Cr. Hours

	<u>Parks, Recreation, &amp; Tourism Core</u>
3	PRT 6000: History and Philosophy of PRT
3	PRT 6030: Seminar in Facilitation and Management of Recreation Experiences
3	PRT 6820: Seminar in Leisure, Health, and Environments
1	PRT 7800: Graduate Seminar
	<u>Research Core</u>
3	PRT 6010: Behavioral Science Foundations
3	PRT 7102: Introduction to Research Methods
3	3 hours of statistics (PRT/KINES 7103) or equivalent research tools course
6	PRT 6970: Thesis Research
11	<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

	<u>Parks, Recreation, &amp; Tourism Core</u>
3	PRT 6000: History and Philosophy of PRT
3	PRT 6820: Seminar in Leisure, Health, & Environments
3	PRT 6030: Seminar in Facilitation of Recreation Experiences
1	PRT 6840: Graduate Seminar I
1	PRT 6850: Graduate Seminar II
	<u>Research Core</u>
3	PRT 6010: Behavioral Science Foundations
3	PRT/KINES 6550: Interpreting Research
6	<u>Capstone Experience</u> PRT 6860: Non-Thesis Project (Must contain service learning & a significant project)
11	<u>Specialization</u> Area of specialization negotiated with supervisory committee (up to 50% can be approved by advisor)
36	Total

## **DEFENSES and WRITTEN EXAMINATIONS**

Master's students in the thesis and non-thesis options complete different capstone projects. Students in the thesis option complete a proposal defense and final oral examination of their research thesis. Students in the non-thesis option complete a proposal defense and present their final projects via a poster presentation to fellow graduate students and faculty.

### **THESIS OPTION**

*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 Defense**

Students must have completed the majority of their coursework and have no more than 6 credits remaining when they propose their projects. Thesis students must propose their research to their supervisory committee prior to commencing the research itself. 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 Graduate Bulletin.

#### **Final Oral Examination**

The second defense is of the completed research 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.

#### **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.

## NON-THESIS OPTION

*Developing a project topic and compiling the components of the final document is a multi-step process. It is important to begin the process early.*

**Proposal defenses 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.**

Students who opt for the non-thesis (professional) option will identify a particular area of professional interest, and complete a tangible project that contributes to their professional development in an area of expertise. 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 parks, recreation, or tourism 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 PRT 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 project hours, they must formally propose their projects to their supervisory committee. Students must have completed the majority of their coursework and have no more than 6 credits remaining when they propose their projects. Students are also encouraged to formally present their projects to the agency or organization if they are working toward developing a new resource or other deliverable to or for an agency prior to starting the project. 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. Students must receive project proposal approval from their supervisory committee before starting the project.



It is important that students take PRT 6840 and PRT 6850 in sequential order (Fall:Spring) so as to complete the components of their projects. During the PRT 6840, students develop and propose their projects. Project proposals should be completed and approved by the supervisory committee **prior to** enrolling in PRT 6850. In PRT 6850, students will complete the actionable elements of their project (e.g., collect and analyze data, develop resource, conduct intervention, implement program) and prepare their final documents. All non-thesis students will present their projects near the end of the PRT 6850 in class sponsored poster session prior to graduation, but will also provide a copy of their projects to their supervisory committees for feedback. Final copies of the project should be distributed to the supervisory committee members a minimum of one week before the poster presentations. In order to graduate, projects must be deemed “acceptable” by every member of the committee.

### **Evaluation Procedures**

- Students may schedule a meeting with the chair of their supervisory committee to discuss faculty feedback from their proposals and defenses. Alternately, feedback may be given directly by individual committee members.
- In the instance that a student receives an “unacceptable” rating, the individual faculty member is encouraged to meet with the student to discuss the shortcomings. Students will have one week to address all elements that are deemed “unacceptable” and re-submit the document to the committee member in question for review. If the student fails to make an “acceptable” rating after the re-write, 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, a complete re-write of the document, 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.

### **CHECKLIST OF STEPS FOR COMPLETING THE MASTER’S 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 Health, Kinesiology, and Recreation Graduate Program Manager.

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 prerequisite 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 assistant 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 Health, Kinesiology, and Recreation Graduate Program Manager following notification by the Department's administrative assistant. 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 Health, Kinesiology, and Recreation Graduate Program Manager 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 Health, Kinesiology, and Recreation Graduate Program Manager 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 so that your committee can sign them if they are satisfied with the student's defense and written document work.

**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.
- [ ] 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: <https://health.utah.edu/health-kinesiology-recreation/recreation/degrees/>

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