

M.A./M.Ed. Handbook

2020-2022

Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development

This Handbook is designed to provide masters students in the Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development (OLPD) information about graduate programs and procedures. The Handbook augments and is not a substitute for other sources of information. The information in this handbook and other University catalogs, publications, or announcements is subject to change without notice. University offices can provide current information about possible changes.

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Pathway to the Master's Degree: Tasks and When You Should Complete Them

*Tasks noted here with asterisks (***) have associated deadlines.
Your progress on these tasks is checked during your annual review in Spring Semester,
in accordance with the **Good Progress Rule**.*

Step 1: Taking Courses / Credits

- Take courses or other credits as required or advised in your program.
Register for credits throughout your program, in accordance with the **Continuous Enrollment Rule**.
- Declare a minor (optional).
A minor, if any, must be declared before submitting the GPAS form.
- M.A. students:** Reaffirm your M.A. Plan Type (Plan A or Plan B).
Your plan type must be reaffirmed before submitting the GPAS form.
- *** Submit the Graduate Planning & Audit System (GPAS) form.
Submit by the time you have completed 15 credits in the program (not counting transfer credits)
- Review online graduation completion website.

Step 2: M.A. Plan A Master's Thesis / Plan B Master's Paper

- *** **M.A. students:** Establish the master's final examination committee.
This task needs to be completed within 3 months after submitting the GPAS form.
- M.A. students:** Obtain Institutional Review Board approval of your research before beginning any data collection or other research.
- M.A. students:** Write the Plan A master's thesis or Plan B master's paper.
- M.A. students:** Submit the Plan A master's thesis or Plan B master's paper.

- M.A. Plan A students:** Take Final Examination
- M.A. students:** Make required revisions in the Plan A master's thesis or Plan B master's paper, if any.

Step 3: Completion of the Degree

- *** Submit all required documents by the end of the 5th year in the program, in accordance with the **5-Year Time Limit Rule**.
- Graduate (!). Attend the commencement ceremony (!)

Three Important Rules

There are three important rules that you need to be aware of before you begin your master's program and throughout your time as a master's student: The Continuous Enrollment Rule, The Good Progress Rule, and The 5-Year Time Limit Rule

Continuous Enrollment Rule

All graduate students must register for courses or credits every Fall and Spring semester in order to maintain active student status.

If you have taken all required coursework, but have not completed the program, the One Stop Student Services website contains current information and policies regarding [registration to maintain “active” status](#). Even students who have completed all required coursework or their final paper must register until they are ready to graduate.

Students who do not register by the last day of the registration period in Fall or Spring Semester will be automatically discontinued from the program and will no longer be considered active in the program. They will have to reapply for admission, and readmission is never guaranteed.

Registration Exceptions

The University has specified deadlines each semester for adding or dropping courses. If you wish to request a change to your registration (for example, to add or drop a course, or to change your grade basis for a course) after a deadline or if you wish to register for more than 18 credits, you need to [complete an online registration exception request form](#). Once submitted, the form will be forwarded to the proper individuals for approval. Note that University policy explicitly prohibits changes in grade basis (such as switching from A-F to S/N) after the second week of class.

Leaves of Absence (LOA)

The University of Minnesota leave of absence policy for graduate students allows graduate students to interrupt their enrollment for up to two years for reasons they cannot control (e.g., military service, medical issues, etc.) and return under the rules and policies in effect when they left without having to re-apply or negatively affecting their time to degree. ***Taking a leave of absence should be used only as a last resort, not a first.*** Full information regarding the University's [leave-of-absence policy can be accessed online](#).

The Department will grant a leave of absence for only one year or less at a time. Per the policy described above, a student may apply for a second year, if necessary, but the student must submit a separate application.

Please note the following points:

- Students should consult with their advisor prior to requesting an leave of absence. Being approved for a leave of absence does not guarantee the preservation of any financial aid or assistantship appointment the student may be currently holding.
- The submission of a leave-of-absence request does not guarantee that it will be approved by the Department or College, nor does it automatically cancel any active registrations. Students are responsible for cancelling any classes for which they registered prior to the leave of absence request.
- Barring an unexpected emergency situation, leave-of-absence requests must be submitted at least two weeks prior to the beginning of the term in which the leave will begin.
- Students on a leave of absence will not have access to any University resources that are exclusive to students (including library privileges, access to faculty, and so on). The only exception to this is use of University email.
- Students returning from a leave must fill out a leave-of-absence re-entry form before the semester in which they wish to re-enter.
- Students may return early so long as the leave-of-absence re-entry form is submitted before the semester in which they wish to re-enter.
- Failure to return by the semester indicated on the leave-of-absence application will result in the student being discontinued from the program.
- International students should consult with International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) prior to requesting a leave of absence as such action could affect their visa status.

Applying for Readmission

If students become "inactive" or "discontinued" they will automatically be withdrawn from the program and must apply for readmission if they wish to regain active student status.

Readmission of a discontinued student is never guaranteed.

Students applying for readmission to an OLPD master's program should consult the [OLPD readmission website](#).

Good Progress Rule

Students are required to maintain good progress toward their degrees throughout their graduate programs.

Each spring, the Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy and Development reviews the progress of all graduate students. (Certain programs within the Department may also perform reviews in the fall). This review process is viewed as a way of supporting students in their progression towards the degree and in their professional development. The annual review assures that problems are identified early so that students can receive timely guidance.

A student whose progress is found to be deficient is notified in writing of the deficiencies and is afforded an opportunity to demonstrate improvement. A registration hold may be placed on the student's record until the issue is resolved. The advisor and the Coordinator of Graduate Studies (on behalf of the Director of Graduate Studies) typically create a timeline by which deficiencies must be remedied, and a written agreement as to what will be considered demonstrated improvement may be made between the CGS and the student if the situation warrants it. Students are responsible for contacting their advisors to develop plans for making satisfactory progress by the deadlines.

Incomplete Grades

One aspect of maintaining good progress relates to incomplete grades. Course instructors are not obligated to assign incomplete ("I") grades when coursework has not been finished, but some do. It is always in your best interest to resolve all incomplete grades as soon as possible. The Department allows graduate students to carry a maximum of 8 non-reported ("NR") or "I" credits in the program at any given time. Students with more than 8 "NR" or "I" credits risk having a registration hold being placed on their student record until they are under the limit.

Many instructors will establish conditions that a student must meet prior to assigning an "I" grade. Some instructors require a written agreement with the student so there is no misunderstanding about expectations in resolving the "I" grade. Although such formal agreements are not required, both you and the instructor may find such a contract useful in case there are any future misunderstandings over outstanding requirements.

Only an assigned instructor of a given course can assign a grade for that course. Only this person may update an "NR" or "I" grade or a "K" grade (which is assigned by an instructor to indicate that the course is still in progress and that a grade cannot be assigned at the present time). If the course instructor leaves the University or too much time passes, it may not be possible to update the course grade, or the instructor may decide to assign a grade based on the coursework received to date from the student. If a given course does not have a specific assigned instructor of record, please contact the Coordinator of Graduate Studies for instructions.

5-Year Time Limit Rule

The Graduate School requires that all incoming master's students complete their degrees within five calendar years of their initial enrollment into the graduate program.

Whether a student is attending the master's program on a full- or part-time basis, all requirements for the master's degree must be completed and the degree awarded within five years after admission and matriculation to the graduate program. Applying the Graduate School's current interpretation of this rule, a student who enters a master's program in Fall 2021 must complete the degree by the end of Fall 2026.

Applying for a Time Extension

A student who, for legitimate reasons, is unable to complete the degree within the time limits indicated above may petition for an extension. It is important to note that time-extension requests are not automatically approved and they may be denied.

By Department rules, the student may petition the Department and College for one extension of up to one year by submitting a [Request for Extension to the Maximum Time Limit form](#). The student must obtain the approval of the advisor, the Director of Graduate Studies and the College. This petition must be submitted at least six months prior to the end of the time limit.

If a petition is approved, you will be notified in writing of the expectations for progress and of the deadline (month and year) for degree conferral. If the petition is denied, you will be notified in writing that you will be terminated from the graduate program upon expiration of the time limit.

Under extraordinary circumstances, students may file a second petition; however, such petitions after the initial extension must be reviewed and approved by the advisor, the Director of Graduate Studies, the CEHD Dean's Office, and the Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education. Students who have been terminated under such circumstances may apply for readmission to the program; however, readmission is not guaranteed.

Step 1: Taking Courses / Credits

Course and credit requirements are described in this section. Students are, of course, permitted to take additional courses or credits beyond those required.

All graduate-level courses offered by the Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy and Development in a particular semester are listed on the University of Minnesota's OneStop website.

Students are encouraged to take advantage of the extraordinary opportunity to enroll in courses relevant to their master's degree study across the Department's programs, across the College's departments, and across the University.

All course selections and planning should be done in consultation with your advisor. In particular, students should consult with their advisors before choosing a pass/fail grading option (designated "S/N" for satisfactory / not satisfactory) for courses that allow either letter grades or S/N grades.

To register for classes, access the University's registration system through [One Stop Student Services](#). One Stop has an [online tutorial on how to register for University classes](#).

Courses / Credits for Your Degree Program

For details on course requirements, consult the Program Planning Sheet for your degree and your program track. Your advisor can direct you to the correct Program Planning Sheet.

The M.A. Programs

The master of arts programs in Organizational Leadership, Policy and Development (OLPD) are individualized according to student background, academic interests, prior educational experience, and professional goals. Students have two options for the degree: Plan A (with master's thesis) or Plan B (without thesis but with additional courses). Upon admission, all M.A. students are assumed to be pursuing Plan B, because most OLPD M.A. students have historically opted for Plan B, but this status can be changed to Plan A upon email request to the Coordinator of Graduate Studies.

The OLPD M.A. programs include the following course work areas: program core, electives, related fields and research methodology. In addition, all students register for Plan A thesis credits or for Plan B credits. A final oral defense of the thesis is required for the Plan A option, while the Plan B option requires a satisfactory review by the three committee members. The total number of credits needed to complete the master's degree is 30 or more semester credits. Six of the total

credits for a M.A. must be from courses in other departments or OLPD program areas. Within the general framework for M.A. requirements, the degree program is developed by the student and his or her advisor, and is subject to approval by the Department's Director of Graduate Studies and the Graduate School.

The M.Ed. Programs

The Master of Education (M.Ed.) programs in adult education, leadership in education, and human resource development are individualized according to student background, academic interests, prior educational experience, and professional goals. M.Ed. Programs are classified as Plan C (coursework only). The total number of credits needed to complete the master's degree is 30 or more semester credits. Within the general framework for M.Ed. requirements, the degree program is developed by the student and his or her advisor, and is subject to approval by the Department's Director of Graduate Studies and the Graduate School.

Other Credit Options

Students must register for some course or credit every Fall Semester and every Spring Semester. Sometimes students and their advisors agree to do OLPD 5095: Problems together as a type of independent study; other times, students need a special registration option. For example, M.A. students may need to register for non-course credits if they have completed all the courses for the master's but have not yet completed the master's paper.

There are three main options for students. [Full details on all the special registration categories below can be found online](#). These credits are not meant to be long-term place holders.

While these course options will not apply towards a degree, they will maintain a student's active status in the program.

OLPD 8333: Masters Status

Who may register: only M.A. students on the Plan A track who have successfully completed all required coursework, all thesis credits and all other steps to the Master's other than the Plan A paper. To register, a student must submit an application, which must be approved before registration can take place.

This one-credit registration option is for M.A./Plan A students who must certify full-time status to be in compliance with requirements of the University or external agencies (such as employment as a graduate assistant, loan deferment, visa requirements, etc.). Regular tuition rates apply.

This course may not be taken with any other courses in a given semester. A new application must be submitted for every semester a student intends to take OLPD 8333. The application deadline is early in the previous semester. [The application form and instructions are available online](#).

GRAD 999: Graduate School Active Status

Who may register: only master's students who have completed all coursework and (if applicable) thesis credit requirements. To register, a student must submit a Departmental petition to the Coordinator of Graduate Studies, which must be approved before registration can take place. Requests to take GRAD 999 that are submitted after the last day to add a class in any given semester will automatically be denied.

By Department policy, a master's student may use this registration option only once during the degree program. This course option is tuition-free to students, but the College is charged a fee of approximately \$2,000 per semester per student enrolled in GRAD 999 to pay for services accessed to during the semester.

This zero-credit, zero-tuition registration option is intended for students who need to maintain their active student status. Students cannot use GRAD 999 to meet any other requirements of the University or external agencies. For example, students who must maintain full-time status to hold an assistantship, defer loans or receive financial aid cannot use GRAD 999 to meet related eligibility requirements.

International students must consult with the Office of International Student and Scholars Services (ISSS) prior to taking GRAD 999, as there may be consequences related to visa status. International students may need to complete certain forms for ISSS prior to enrolling in GRAD 999, in order to maintain their visa status.

Including Transfer Credits in Your Degree Program

With the approval of the advisor, the Director of Graduate Studies, and the College of Education and Human Development, students may apply some coursework from another graduate degree program to the master's program. Such coursework may be, for example, from a master's program completed at the University of Minnesota or other recognized graduate institution. Students should discuss with their advisors the possible use of these credits in their programs.

Credits are transferred by listing the courses on the Program Planning Sheet. Credits not accepted as part of a student's Graduate Planning and Audit System (GPAS) form (see below) cannot be transferred to the University of Minnesota graduate transcript.

Policies in both the Department and the Graduate School determine the number and nature of the credits that can be transferred.

Department Policy

Transfer of credits requires advisor approval in relation to the master's student's program plan. Students who wish to transfer previous graduate coursework to the *departmental core* or *program core* requirements may do so only with approval of the advisor and by formal petition to the appropriate program coordinator.

Master's students may be allowed to transfer up to 9 credits of previous graduate work into their master's program. The credits earned must:

- 1) meet criteria presented in the Graduate Education Catalog,
- 2) closely match the planned program emphasis, and
- 3) be approved by the advisor.

Graduate Education Policy

Some of the general Graduate School rules that apply to transfer of credits are listed below. For further requirements and information, students should check the [Graduate Education Catalog](#).

- Graduate-level courses taken before the award of the baccalaureate degree typically cannot be transferred.
- Graduate-level courses appearing on an undergraduate transcript cannot be transferred into a graduate program.
- Graduate-level courses taken through the College of Continuing and Professional Studies or the Masters of Liberal Studies program at the University of Minnesota are not accepted for transfer.
- The Graduate School allows a maximum of 9 semester credits taken as a non-degree graduate student. Such credits count as transfer credits. Refer to the Graduate Education Catalog for details and consult with your advisor (and, if necessary, your Program Coordinator or the Coordinator of Graduate Studies) before making assumptions about transfer credits.
- Official transcripts of the transfer coursework (from institutions other than the University of Minnesota) must be submitted to the Graduate School Office of Admission if they were not submitted previously, during the admissions process.

Transferring Courses from a Quarter System

To convert quarter-based credits to a semester-based program, multiply the number of quarter credits by .67 to obtain semester credit equivalencies.

Transferring in OLPD Coursework Taken Under Prior Designators

Prior to Spring 2012, OLPD courses were listed under five course designators (ADED, BIE, EDPA, HRD, and WHRE). Prior to Summer 2016, certain OLPD courses were listed under the PSTL course designator. Students transferring in courses under these designators need to list them using their original designators and course numbers.

Including a Minor in Your Degree Program

M.A. students are eligible to complete a minor program of study to complement the major program for the master's degree. Most OLPD M.Ed. programs do allow students to take a minor, but a few do not. (Check with the Coordinator of Graduate Studies, if interested.) The minor program may be housed in OLPD or in another department. ***Taking a minor is optional.*** Students interested in pursuing a minor are strongly encouraged to discuss the possibility with their faculty advisor. Some minors are more complementary to a given major program than others.

A current listing of all [graduate minors \(program related and free standing\)](#) can be found within the Graduate School's website. Minor programs housed within OLPD include:

- [Integrative Leadership](#)
- [International Education](#) (through Comparative International Development Education)
- [Program Evaluation](#) (through Evaluation Studies)
- [Sociocultural Studies in Education](#)

Every minor has its own Director of Graduate Studies (DGS of the minor). The DGS of the minor program must approve and sign all paperwork you submit concerning curricular matters. Requirements for eligibility and admission to individual minors vary widely. Students are advised to study the minor program's website and contact the DGS of the minor to determine what is required for admission and completion of the minor.

Declaring a Minor

After you have been admitted to a minor program, you must declare to the Graduate School that you are in that minor. A minor is officially declared by a) registering it via the appropriate online form available on the One Stop website and b) obtaining the approval of the minor program's Director of Graduate Studies via the Graduate Planning and Audit System (GPAS; see below).

The minor must be declared prior to submitting the GPAS form for the major program. When the minor appears on the student's Graduate School record, a second GPAS form for the minor will appear in the system. The student should submit the GPAS form for the minor program at the same time the GPAS form for the major program is submitted.

M.A. Students: Advisor in the Minor Program

M.A. students who enroll in a minor will be assigned an advisor in that minor. The major advisor cannot also serve as your minor advisor. The minor advisor must be assigned as an outside graduate committee member (see Appendix). If the minor advisor is removed and not replaced with another minor advisor, the minor will be removed from the student's record, even if the student has completed all the required coursework.

Allocating Courses to the Major and Minor Programs

A specific course can only satisfy a major requirement or a minor requirement, not both. A student cannot count the same credits for core requirements for the major and for the minor.

Dropping a Minor

Consult the OLPD Coordinator of Graduate Studies for instructions.

M.A. Students: Reaffirming Your Plan Type (Plan A or Plan B)

As part of their degree program, all admitted M.A. students in Organizational Leadership, Policy and Development (OLPD) have the option to pursue the degree via the Plan A or Plan B curricular option. The current curricular differences in these options vary by program and can be seen on the program planning sheets on the OLPD website. In order to best utilize the online Graduate Planning and Audit System (GPAS), students need to have declared whether they are pursuing the M.A. degree through Plan A or a Plan B, before submitting the GPAS form. Failure to declare the proper Plan Type prior to submitting the GPAS form can lead to significant delays in processing your GPAS form.

Historically over 90 percent of OLPD M.A. students have opted to complete the degree under Plan B, so all entering students are assumed to be pursuing the Plan B program.

Students should consult with their faculty advisor prior to deciding whether they will pursue the degree under the Plan A or Plan B type.

If you wish to stay with Plan B, no action is required.

If you wish to switch to Plan A, contact the Coordinator of Graduate Studies by email to request that the department update your record.

All M.Ed. students pursue the degree on Plan C (that is, coursework only). M.Ed. students cannot switch Plan types.

Submitting the Graduate Planning and Audit System Form (GPAS)

The Graduate Planning and Audit System (GPAS) form is a required online form that must be submitted to the Graduate School. This form is accessible online via the MyU Student Portal. When completed, the GPAS lists all the courses that constitute the student's own, individual course of study for the M.A. or M.Ed., that is, all the courses that will count toward the student's master's degree.

For M.A. students, the GPAS form should be filed no later than when the student has completed 15 credits, not counting transfer credits. Failure to do so may result in a registration hold being

placed on the student's registration until this step is completed. Also, the GPAS form must be filed and approved before the student establishes a final examination committee.

For M.Ed. students, the GPAS form is typically filed toward the end of their coursework.

Note that the GPAS form is filed before the student has completed the coursework for the degree. Having an approved GPAS form on file helps you plan ahead and protects you from possible, future curriculum changes.

Another important function of the GPAS form is to verify that you have taken all required coursework for the program. When you get close to graduating, the Office of the Registrar runs an audit of your GPAS form against your transcript, to ensure you have met all degree requirements and taken all courses listed on the GPAS form. If the audit finds anything amiss, you will be notified that the issue needs to be addressed before you can graduate.

Steps for Submitting a GPAS Form

Students need to follow the steps listed here to submit the GPAS form for the primary program. Those who have a minor need to submit a GPAS form for the minor as well (see below).

1) Fill out the Program Planning Sheet for the master's in your program area with your advisor's guidance. Do not initiate the submission process until your advisor has approved your full course plan.

You need to list all courses that will constitute your graduate program: courses you have taken, courses you are currently taking, courses you will take, and courses you intend to transfer into your program from another graduate degree program. You also need to include all courses that constitute your minor, if any.

If you intend to include transfer credits from other graduate programs or a substitution to a stated requirement, be sure to list these on the sheet in the proper places. Your advisor can help you with this part.

2) Obtain your advisor's signature on the Program Planning Sheet. If you have more than one advisor, the primary advisor needs to sign.

3) Submit the signed form to the Department's Coordinator of Graduate Studies. The CGS takes care of most of the submission process for the GPAS form.

There is, however, one more step you need to take.

4) Access the GPAS system. This is currently done by following the steps below:

- On the University's website, sign into the MyU portal.
- Select the "Academics" tab.
- Select the "Degree Progress" sub-tab.

- Click the "Grad Planning & Audit System" link located near the bottom of the page.

You are now in the GPAS system.

- Be sure your graduate program is the one listed. If the graduate program that appears is incorrect, press the tab labeled "Change" next to the program name and select the proper program.
- ***Do NOT add or change any courses or transfer credits. Just press the "Submit" button at the bottom.***

You are now done with your part of the GPAS. Exit the system.

All graduate-level courses that you have taken at the University in the past, are currently taking, or are currently registered for will automatically load into your GPAS form.

All future courses and transfer courses that you listed and all course substitutions to which you and your advisor have agreed will be entered into the GPAS system manually by the Coordinator of Graduate Studies (CGS), using the Program Planning Sheet that your advisor signed and you submitted. Please note that the CGS can deny a substitution related to a requirement, if it is deemed inappropriate.

Note: If you look deeper into your GPAS form online, there is a good chance that you will see that not everything is listed correctly. ***This is normal so do not worry.*** The CGS will use the Program Planning Sheet to fix all inconsistencies manually.

When the CGS determines that all degree requirements are met, the GPAS form is approved at the Department level and then forwarded to the Graduate School's office of Graduate Student Services and Progress. Once your GPAS has been approved at that level, it will be reflected on your student record.

Steps for Submitting a GPAS Form for a Minor Program

Courses in your minor must be included on the Program Planning Sheet that you submit for your major program.

Some colleges at the University do not yet use the GPAS system. If your minor is in the College of Education and Human Development though, you need to submit a separate GPAS form for the minor. To submit a GPAS form for a minor that uses the GPAS system, follow step 4) above but sign into the minor program instead of the major program.

If you are uncertain about the need to submit a GPAS form or if you encounter any problems, contact the Coordinator of Graduate Studies for assistance.

Updating the GPAS Form

Sometimes a student needs to revise a GPAS form that has already been submitted. The student and advisor may agree that certain courses listed on the form should be changed, or there may be changes in the courses offered. All changes need to be discussed with and approved by the advisor.

Email all GPAS changes to the Coordinator of Graduate Studies, copying your advisor for proof of approval. Clearly specify which courses need to be removed and/or added. It is often best to submit a revised Program Planning Sheet with all changes clearly noted.

Please submit changes to the CGS in a batch, not every time you make a single change in your program.

Obtaining a Graduation Packet

Once your GPAS form is completed and your committee is established (if applicable), you will be eligible to request your final documents via the [Graduate Program Degree Completion Steps page](#). The page contains important information including the online Graduate Application for Degree form, the Reviewers' Report form (if you are on Plan A) or the Final Examination Report/Final Report form (if you are on Plan B). The M.A. master's exam or thesis defense cannot be evaluated/graded without the documents in the found on the site.

Please note that in order to graduate in a given month you must submit the online Graduate Application for Degree form by the last work day of the month before your intended graduation month. For example, if you want to graduate in May, you must submit the Graduate Application for Degree form no later than the last day in April. If you do not complete the program by the last day of the month, you will need to contact GSSP to inform them of which month you intend to graduate so they can update your record.

Step 2: M.A. Plan A Master's Thesis or Plan B Master's Paper

M.A. students in the Plan A track complete a Plan A master's thesis; those in the Plan B track complete a Plan B master's paper. All students should consult their advisors to determine when work should begin on the master's project and what the overall timeline should be for completing them.

M.Ed. students are in a coursework-only track (Plan C) and do not write a final paper/examination that is graded by a committee.

Establish the Final Examination Committee

This step needs to be completed soon after submitting the GPAS form and at least one month before submitting the Plan A master's thesis or Plan B master's paper for evaluation. A master's student establishes an examination committee by identifying faculty members for the committee and submitting their names to the Graduate School via the required form.

Identifying Members of the Examination Committee

The student must work closely with the advisor to identify individuals who may be a good fit for the committee and the student's research interests. Once the student and advisor have agreed on a set of potential committee members and the role that each will play on the committee, the student should contact each one with a request to serve on the committee.

The process of identifying committee members must be informed by the rules as to who can be on a committee and who can serve in each role on the committee. Some of the rules below related to faculty-role status, which determines whether or not an individual is able to serve on a graduate committee. A complete listing of individuals who have faculty role status at the University, their tenure status, and their availability for certain committee roles is available online.

An examination committee must meet the following criteria:

- There must be at least three members on the committee.

It is possible, but generally not advisable, to have a fourth member.

- The advisor typically serves as the committee chair.

- At least two members must have faculty-role status in a major program in the Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy and Development. These individuals are considered to be your "internal" or "inside" members.

Your primary advisor must serve as an inside committee member.

- At least one member must have faculty-role status in a graduate major or a graduate minor program outside the Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy and Development. This individual is considered to be your "external or "outside" member.

If you have declared a minor, your minor advisor must serve as the outside member on your committee. If for any reason the minor advisor is dropped from the committee and not replaced with another individual with faculty-role status in that minor, the minor will be dropped from your record.

Some OLPD faculty and administrators have faculty-role status in an OLPD major, a minor, or other units at the University. In most instances, OLPD faculty and administrators with statuses in minors or outside of the department may serve as an outside member. For example, if Professor Q has a faculty role status in OLPD and in Social Work, Professor Q can be assigned as one of your inside members or as the outside member of your committee, but not both.

Occasionally, there are special circumstances involved in establishing an Examination Committee. Here are the rules for some special cases:

One of the members of the committee no longer has faculty-role status:

If the individual was on the committee prior to the expiration of faculty-role status, that individual, if willing, can still serve on the committee.

Note that if an individual who no longer has faculty-role status they cannot be switched to a different position on the committee (as, for example, from inside to outside member).

One of the members of the committee has left the University (by retiring, taking a position elsewhere, etc.):

The student should consult with the advisor to determine whether it would be best interest to keep that person on the committee or replace that member with a different faculty member. If both agree that the original member should remain on the committee, the student should make that request in writing (preferably by email). The original committee member may or may not agree to continue. There are no payments or reimbursements for members who are no longer University faculty.

The student and advisor agree to invite an individual not affiliated with the University to serve on the final examination committee.

It is possible to petition for such an addition, but it is extremely rare for an M.A. student to have a non-University committee member. Consult with the Coordinator of Graduate Studies on this matter.

Steps in Establishing the Final Examination Committee

Once the student and advisor have agreed on the committee membership and all committee members have agreed to serve the committee, the student needs to [petition online for the membership be established](#). The online form can only be initiated by the student, via the student's University login account.

Once submitted, the committee request is electronically routed to the following for approval:

- the primary advisor
- the Director of Graduate Studies (or the Coordinator of Graduate Studies, as designee)
- the Dean's Office of the College of Education and Human Development.

Once all these parties have approved the committee, the members of the committee and their roles will be officially recorded by the Graduate School.

If the advisor, DGS, or Dean's Office rejects the committee membership request for any reason, the student will be notified and will need to resubmit the committee request. If a reason is not given for the rejection, the student should consult the CGS or the faculty advisor.

Steps in Changing the Final Examination Committee

If the committee member being replaced is not the advisor, the student, with the advisor's approval, [completes a new online request](#), as above, to replace the member.

If the committee member being replaced is the advisor, the student needs to complete a Change of Advisor form first and return it to the Coordinator of Graduate Studies. Only the Department can re-assign a student's advisor within the graduate student record system. Once a new advisor is confirmed in the system, the student fills out a new online request form.

Obtaining Human Subjects Approval of the Proposed Research from the Institutional Review Board

Any research that involves human subjects on or off campus must be approved by the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to data collection. The student cannot initiate the research before obtaining University approval to conduct the research.

[Information and forms are available online](#) or through the IRB Office. Questions concerning exemptions or other aspects of human subjects research review should be addressed to the IRB: Human Subjects Committee at 612-626-5654. The IRB's website provides detailed information about the processes and the conditions associated with each level of review. There are three options: a full committee review, an expedited review, and exemption from review. The full review level requires a full review by the IRB, which may take four to six weeks for review and notification of the decision. These forms are appropriate for research designs that may involve a potential threat to the human subjects or involve minors and thus may require more deliberation. The expedited review involves minimal risk to human subjects but nevertheless has some potential risk. Exempted review applies to research projects that involve very minimal risk. Many students' master's projects qualify for the exempted review, but only the IRB can make this determination. Exemption waives only the need for further review; it does not negate the need for obtaining the consent of subjects where applicable.

No research may be initiated until written notification of IRB approval is received. There can be no recruitment of subjects, no advertising, no mailing or distribution of consent forms, and no data gathering before the IRB has granted approval and indicated that the research may begin. Any concerns of the Human Subjects Committee must be addressed fully before approval is granted.

Plan A Master's Thesis

The Plan A master's thesis in OLPD is a demonstration of the student's ability to conduct independent field research using approved scholarly methods of investigation. General guidelines for the master's thesis are given in the Graduate Education Catalog. Plan A students should review these in detail. Specific guidelines for individual thesis work are determined by the student, the M.A. advisor, and committee members (where relevant).

When the thesis is completed, all committee members must certify that the thesis is acceptable and ready for defense by signing the Reviewers Report from the graduation packet.

The final examination for the Plan A master's degree is an oral examination. The oral defense is a closed examination, attended only by the student and the examining committee. Additional details concerning Plan A thesis requirements, examination, and submission of the approved thesis to the Graduate School can be found in the Graduate Education Catalog.

It is the student's responsibility to schedule the final examination with the committee members on a suitable date, reserve a room through the Department office, inform the Graduate School at least one week in advance of the examination (student can call the office of Graduate Student Services and Progress or fill out the online form) and send the required exam form to committee chair before the exam.

It is also the student's responsibility to provide all committee members with copies of the completed paper at least two weeks prior to scheduled examination.

Typically, students are asked to give a formal presentation of the thesis before questioning begins. If the thesis is a research inquiry, the presentation might include the purpose, framework, data analysis, major findings, conclusions and implications for practice, policy and research. The presentation is typically 15-20 minutes and can be enhanced by handouts or overheads that outline the presentation and address key findings or conclusions. The presentation should be rehearsed to improve timing, organization and ease in presentation.

After the presentation, the faculty pose questions to the student pertaining to any aspect of the paper. The final examination covers the major field and the minor or related fields, and may include any work fundamental to these areas. After questioning is completed, the student is excused and committee members independently vote by ballot to pass or fail the student's defense of the paper. In order to pass, two of the three committee members must vote to pass.

Plan B Master's Paper

Students electing the Plan B masters option must demonstrate familiarity with the tools of research or scholarship in their major field, ability to work independently, and ability to present the results of their investigation effectively by completing a Plan B paper. The nature of the Plan B paper varies across the OLPD programs; students should check with advisors about acceptable frameworks for their papers. The Plan B paper must reflect a minimum of 120 hours of scholarly work (three full-time weeks). General guidelines for the Plan B paper are given in the Graduate Education Catalog; Plan B students should review these in detail.

The advisor will determine when the Plan B paper is ready to present to the committee. Writing is likely to take several iterations. The Plan B paper, when approved by all members of the examining committee, serves as the final written examination for the master's degree. There is no final oral examination. The student should obtain the Final Examination form for the M.A. from the online graduation packet and give it to the advisor at the time of submission of the final copy for committee members' review.

Step 3: Completion of the Degree

M.A. students: Once your final thesis/paper is successfully completed, and any required revisions have been made and approved by the advisor and/or committee, you will need to submit the remaining materials in your graduation packet to the GSSP Office and the One Stop Office, as indicated on the forms. Some forms may be submitted electronically.

M.Ed. students: Be sure that all materials in your graduation packet are sent to the proper offices listed.

Graduation

Graduate degrees are awarded monthly. All Graduate School requirements must be completed by the last working day of the intended month of graduation.

To graduate at the end of any given month students must:

- submit their Graduate School Application for Degree form online **before the first day of the intended month of graduation**, and
- complete all other requirements **by the last day of the intended month of graduation**.

For example, students who wish to graduate in May must apply to graduate **before** May 1, and all requirements (including submission of final paperwork) must be completed by May 31 (or, if May 31 is on a weekend or holiday, on the last workday **before** May 31).

If you submit your final materials later than the month listed on your Graduate School Application for Degree, contact the GSSP Office at gssp@umn.edu to inform them of the situation and learn about options. Depending on your timing, the GSSP Office may treat your existing form as having been submitted in the later month, or they may require you to submit a new form.

Graduating before the end of the term may affect eligibility for student loans, housing, and so on. Check with the appropriate office if you have questions on eligibility.

The diploma will be mailed three to four months after graduation.

Commencement

Commencement, not to be confused with graduation, is a ceremony and celebration of students' accomplishments. The commencement ceremony for the College of Education and Human Development is held once a year, in the late spring. It is the only commencement ceremony held for CEHD advanced degree candidates. Attending or participating in the ceremony does **not** indicate that you have officially graduated.

If you wish to participate in commencement, the online Commencement Attendance Approval Form (which is made available in late Fall on the CEHD website) must be submitted and approved about three months before the commencement ceremony in early May. The Commencement Attendance Approval Form must be approved by the advisor and Director of Graduate Studies. The advisor's approval indicates that (for M.A. students) a draft of the Plan A master's thesis or Plan B master's paper has been completed and that the advisor expects the student to complete the degree by August of that same year. Students whose degrees have been awarded in the months prior to the March deadline need only submit the form to the CEHD Dean's Office.

The faculty of the Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy and Development look forward to celebrating your graduation and your attainment of the master's degree at the commencement ceremony!