Requirements and Procedures for Non-Thesis Master’s Degrees in Programs that Have Both Thesis and Non-Thesis Options

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For those master’s programs in DOEMS that allow students to opt for a non-thesis degree, the non-thesis-degree requirements include an additional three courses in lieu of a thesis (for a total of 33 postgraduate credit-hours), a report that constitutes the written component of the final program examination, an oral examination based on the report, and an oral public presentation.

Timeline for the Non-Thesis Master’s Degree:
In the first month, two semesters before graduation, the student should do the following.
- Establish a committee consisting of two faculty members within the program and one faculty member outside the program.
- Schedule a committee meeting and present the report topic, abstract, and outline.
- Petition to graduate.
- Carefully read bottom of letter from the Registrar in response to the Petition to Graduate.

During the semester in which the student expects to graduate, the student should do the following.
- Present a draft of the report to her/his advisor at least six weeks before the end of the semester.
- Schedule an oral examination, to be based on the content of the written report.
- Send a draft of the written report approved by the advisor to the entire committee at least four weeks in advance of the oral examination.
- Submit an Oral Examination Announcement form to the Office of Graduate Programs at least two weeks in advance of the date of the oral examination.
- Take the oral examination, if approved to do so by the committee based on the committee’s assessment of the written report.
- Ensure that the ‘Oral/Written Examination Report’ is signed by all committee members at the defense and by the Department Head, and submitted to Graduate Programs Office by the Department.

Written Report
The written report should demonstrate competence and scientific literacy in a relevant area of interest to the student, with the subject matter approved by the advisor. To fulfill this requirement, the student should produce a manuscript that contains the following components.
- Introduction with thorough literature review.

1 The bottom portion of the Registrar’s letter lists any deficiencies, such as required courses that have not been taken, warning of low GPA, notice of a grade change, and other miscellaneous items that need to be addressed prior to graduation.
As the primary component of the report, the literature review should demonstrate a breadth of knowledge in the chosen topic-area. The preliminary-research component should investigate a relevant problem, utilize appropriate tools (e.g., data-visualization software and processing) and/or or involve some degree of algorithm-development (i.e., computer programming). In addition to summarizing the findings, the discussion should include ideas for extending the scope of the project.

**Oral Examination**
The oral examination will consist of a public presentation of the results of the work at the graduate-student seminar. (Attendance at the seminar is required of all DOEMS graduate students.) To fulfill this requirement, the student will give a 15-minute oral presentation and take questions. The presentation should contain the following elements.

- A statement of the relevance of the topic.
- A brief overview of previous work in the area, with references as appropriate.
- A succinct presentation of methods, tools applied, etc.
- A description of research highlights.
- A discussion, including issues and problems encountered, as well as future work.
- A few minutes at the end for questions.

Questions, problems, or issues that cannot be addressed by the advisor should be referred to the Program Chairs or the Department Head.