4.11 DEGREE REQUIREMENTS*

*The Graduate School reserves the right to change any provision or requirement at any time in order to fulfill its educational mission and exercise its educational responsibility. Refer to the website for master's and doctoral degree program checklists and the academic forms for additional information.

The general requirements for advanced degrees are set out below. Special divisional (i.e., college and school) and departmental requirements are given in the sections dealing with the respective divisions and departments. Each student must assume full responsibility for understanding both the general and special requirements of the division and department in which he or she pursues his or her major work.

4.11.1 Master's Degrees
4.11.2 Educational Specialist Degrees
4.11.3 Doctoral Degrees

4.11.1 MASTER'S DEGREES

Program Requirements
Two plans are offered for the master's degree:

Plan I. Candidates for the master's degree under Plan I must earn a minimum of 24 semester hours of credit in coursework and write a thesis (a minimum of 6 semester hours of thesis research required).

Plan II. Candidates for the master's degree under Plan II must earn a minimum of 30 semester hours of credit and complete a culminating or “capstone” experience as described under the Comprehensive Examinations section below.

Both plans require a minimum of 18 semester hours in the major subject. With the approval of the major department, the remainder of the coursework may be completed in either the major or a related field.

In some divisions and in many departments of the University, candidates are required to do their work under Plan I. Candidates working under Plan II may be required to participate successfully in seminar or problem courses that will give them an acquaintance with the methods of research and an appreciation of the place and function of original investigation in the field.

Residency Requirements
A student's program at the master's level must provide sufficient association with the resident faculty to permit individual evaluation of the student's capabilities and achievements.

Transfer of Credit
Courses of full graduate-level credit earned in a regionally accredited institution where a student was enrolled in the graduate school may be submitted for review for inclusion in a degree program. Evaluation of credit for transfer will not be made until after the student has enrolled in the Graduate School of The University of Alabama. Acceptance of credit requires the approval of the student's advisory committee and the dean of the Graduate School. Credit will not be accepted for transfer from any institution at which the student failed to achieve a “B” average on all graduate work attempted.

A student initiates in the Office of the Graduate School the request for evaluation of graduate credit obtained at another institution. It is also the student's responsibility to assure that the Graduate School receives an official transcript of the credit concerned, well in advance of the final semester and typically before or at the time of advancement to candidacy.

With the approval of the student's department and the dean of the Graduate School, the greater of 12 hours or 25 percent of the required coursework for a graduate degree may be transferred from another institution. All credit toward the master's degree, including transfer credit, must have been earned during the six years (18 fall, spring, and summer semesters) immediately preceding the date on which the degree is to be awarded.

In some cases, foreign educational credentials may not meet the Graduate School's criteria for transfer of credit. It may be necessary for students in this situation to secure an evaluation of their credentials from World Education.
Services Inc. (WES), an external foreign credential evaluation service. Additional information on their services can be found at their website.

400-Level Courses
A maximum of 6 semester hours of 400-level course credit may be accepted for a master's degree program, but only if a form for Approval of 400-Level Course Work for Master's Credit is approved by the Graduate School prior to the semester in which the 400-level coursework will be taken.

Time Limit
All requirements for the master's degree must be completed during the six years (18 fall, spring, and summer semesters) immediately preceding the date on which the degree is to be awarded.

Admission to Candidacy
Admission to the Graduate School does not imply admission of a student to candidacy for a degree. Admission to candidacy is contingent upon the recommendation of the student's department and the approval of the graduate dean, after the student has met the formal requirements for candidacy listed below and demonstrated sufficient preparation to pursue the graduate study and research required for the degree sought.

The application for Admission to Candidacy for the master's degree should be filed after 12 semester hours of graduate credit have been earned at The University of Alabama. It must be approved by the time of registration for the semester in which requirements for the degree are completed. Approval will depend on (a) the quality of the applicant's graduate work prior to the time the application is made (see Scholastic Requirements); (b) the removal of any special conditions; and (c) the certification of the major department or school that the student is well qualified to continue work toward a degree.

Thesis
A thesis evidencing research capacity, independent thought, and the ability to interpret materials is required of all master's degree candidates who pursue Plan I. The subject chosen must be in the major field and must be approved by the graduate committee of the major department or school and by the head of the student's major department or division.

The University does not permit article-style theses to be presented for the master's degree as it does for the doctoral degree.

The thesis committee must consist of at least three members appointed by the dean of the Graduate School. A Thesis Final Defense Form is used to request that the graduate dean appoint a thesis committee; the request normally is made as soon as the successful defense of the thesis proposal has been completed. All members of a thesis committee must be members of the Graduate Faculty. One member must be from outside the student's major department.

The candidate must give members of the examining committee a minimum of two weeks to read the thesis before the date of the final oral examination. A final oral examination is required of all students completing a thesis. All members of the thesis committee must be members of the UA graduate faculty and must attend the final oral examination unless there are extraordinary circumstances warranting the graduate dean's approval of the absence prior to the defense meeting.

After August 15, 2009, all theses are submitted electronically rather than on paper. See the graduate school's homepage for a link to information on Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETD) for details.

Theses must comply with the regulations set out in A Student Guide to Preparing Electronic Theses and Dissertations, available on the Graduate School's website. Approval of the thesis by the graduate dean is necessary before graduation.

The thesis should be completed, if possible, while the student is in residence at the University. To request permission to complete a thesis in absentia, the student must, before leaving the University, submit a satisfactory outline of the thesis, as well as evidence that adequate facilities are available where the work will be done, to the head of the student's major department.

Protection of Human Subjects for Research
Scientific research involving human subjects has produced substantial benefits for society, but it also can pose troubling ethical questions. The mission of the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Protection of Human Subjects is to ensure that research involving human subjects is conducted ethically. University and federal policies require that review and approval to use human subjects in research precede the research. In the case of thesis research that involves the use of human subjects in any way, the principal investigator is responsible for contacting the college Human Research Review Committee to obtain approval for the planned research.

Comprehensive Examinations
In addition to the regular course examinations, a final comprehensive examination representing a "culminating" or "capstone" experience for a degree is required of all candidates for the master's degree (except for those candidates...
pursuing the master of accountancy, the master of business administration, the master of library and information studies, the master of social work, and the master of tax accounting). The comprehensive examination is a culminating experience in which the student is expected to integrate prior learning. Each department, with approval of the Graduate Council, determines the most appropriate format. The various exams may consist of one or more of the following:

- a written and/or oral examination based on the content of the degree program;
- a thesis and final oral defense;
- a course requiring interpretation and integration of information from previous courses;
- a research paper, a "policy and practice" paper, or equivalent experience;
- a public performance or exhibition along with a contextualizing paper; and/or
- a practicum or internship.

If the comprehensive exam requirement is met with option 1 and/or 2 above, then the examining committee for comprehensive examinations must consist of at least three members of the graduate faculty appointed by the dean of the Graduate School. The examination must be given at least six weeks before the date of graduation (two weeks before for Plan II) and reported promptly to the dean of the Graduate School on appropriate forms. A final report, on the Master’s/EdS Examination Form is on the Graduate School website. The form should be submitted when all examinations are completed. A student may take the final oral or written examination only twice.

Application for Graduation
Each candidate for a master’s degree must apply for graduation through the Office of the Graduate School no later than the registration period for the semester or the first session of the summer term in which requirements for the degree are to be completed. The Application for Degree is available on the Web and is required for this purpose.

Second Master’s Degree
Six (6) semester hours of eligible credit from one master’s degree at The University of Alabama may be applied to the requirements for a second master’s degree, but only if the department of the second master’s agrees to the courses in the plan of study. Any hours from the previous master’s degree must have been earned during the six years (18 fall, spring, and summer semesters) immediately preceding the date on which the second degree is to be awarded.

4.11.2 EDUCATIONAL SPECIALIST DEGREES

The educational specialist degree (EdS) is offered in some departments of the College of Education that offer doctoral degrees. Students interested in the EdS degree should contact the department involved regarding availability of the degree.

The EdS degree normally is granted at the end of the sixth year of collegiate study and falls in time between the master’s degree and the doctorate, although it is not viewed as intermediate between the master's and doctoral degrees. In the College of Education, some EdS degrees lead to a teaching certification for P–12 education fields. In some teaching fields, the purpose of the degree is to prepare undergraduate-college teachers, especially those who will be employed in junior colleges, small private and state colleges, and the group of colleges labeled as "developing" institutions. The primary goals of the EdS degree are teaching and acquiring professional proficiency.

Because the purposes of the EdS degree may differ from those of either the EdD or PhD, credit earned in an EdS program is not automatically transferable to a doctoral program. Instead, if a holder of an EdS degree enters a doctoral program at a later date, the doctoral advisory committee will decide how much of the credit earned in the EdS program will be counted toward the doctorate.

Program Requirements
The EdS degree requires a minimum of 30 semester hours of study beyond the master’s degree. (Students completing an EdS program and also expecting to receive an Alabama Class AA certificate for service in the public schools must complete a minimum of 30 semester hours and achieve a minimum 3.25 grade point average on all work attempted.) Generally, the following requirements will hold for the degree:

- If a student enters a program with a master’s degree in the same field, a minimum of 12 additional semester hours in the field must be taken. (At least 36 graduate semester hours in the field is required for graduation.) Some departments may require more than these minimums.
- If a student enters a program with a master’s degree in a field different from the one in which he or she plans to study, sufficient work in the EdS major field must be taken so that the total graduate semester hours in the field is at least 36. Some departments require more than this minimum.
- Since one of the goals of the EdS degree is to prepare undergraduate-college teachers, certain courses in higher education may be necessary, if required by the major department. A faculty advisor in the program in