



EN ROUTE/EXIT MASTER'S FAQS

Q. What are en route or exit master's degrees?

A. An en route or exit master's is a master's degree with requirements that are fully or largely embedded within Ph.D. program requirements, allowing students to apply their Ph.D. coursework towards the master's degree. This is intended to acknowledge significant master's level work done as part of a doctoral program and can be earned by students who choose to leave the program after earning the master's (an "exit" master's) as well as by students who continue to complete the Ph.D. (an "en route" master's).

Q. Ph.D. students in my program typically complete the requirements for an existing master's degree by the time they exit; can we use that degree as an exit master's?

A. Yes, if the curriculum requirements are the same, you can use the same master's for two purposes. However, if Ph.D. students have different requirements to complete the master's, a separate degree option (with no direct admits) will need to be proposed.

Q. Can programs create a specific set of requirements for Ph.D. students seeking to exit the program?

A. Yes, if you don't have a pre-existing master's program, or if your direct-admit master's program has requirements that Ph.D. students would typically not complete, you can create a "degree option" designed specifically as an en route/exit master's degree.

Q. If my program designs an exit master's for Ph.D. students choosing to exit, will students be able to directly apply to that master's?

A. No, If your program has established an exit and/or en route masters only for the purpose of proving that option to your Ph.D. students, then it would not have a Slate application available for direct admission. It would only be available for a current Ph.D. student to select through the degree request process in MyGrad Program.

Q. My unit does not currently have a master's degree that could be used as an en route/exit option for our Ph.D. students, but we would like to create one. Do we need to go through the full new degree proposal process?

A. For units that would like to create an en route/exit master's degree for use by their Ph.D. students (and not also as a new direct-admit degree), the Office of Academic Affairs has developed an expedited proposal process. A simplified proposal and external review process that foregoes the Planning Notice of Intent (PNOI) and ICAPP review process will be used. Graduate School Council, Board of Regents, and NWCCU approval will still be required.

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Q. Can my unit offer an exit-only master's option for Ph.D. students rather than a combination exit/en route option?

A. Yes. While it is preferable that units offer to their Ph.D. students curriculum requirements that could be used as either an en route or exit master's, units may choose to offer an exit-only option.

Q. Is an en route/exit master's program required to have a thesis?

A. No. An en route/exit master's program should have some kind of culminating or integrated experience as described in [Policy 1.1](#), but this does not have to be a thesis. If appropriate, units may use existing milestones towards the Ph.D. (such as a qualifying or general exam) as the culminating experience, or may offer other options such as a capstone course or project, integrated course sequence, final paper or presentation, creative work, or comprehensive exam.

Q. Can unit faculty instruct Ph.D. students who are not meeting expectations to leave the program with an exit master's degree?

A. No. For both en route and exit master's degree options, students enrolled in Ph.D. programs must enter the program voluntarily. The unit may, but are not required to, offer this opportunity during the process of an Academic Drop from the Ph.D. program that follows Graduate School [Policy 3.7](#).

Q. If a Ph.D. student must leave the program due to circumstances out of their control, can they receive an exit master's degree but still have the option to return to the Ph.D. program later on?

A. Yes. If a student withdraws from the Ph.D. program and leaves with an exit master's they may [apply for reinstatement](#) into the program later. Such reinstatements must be approved by the program faculty.

Q. When should the department change the student's program pathway code so they can earn the exit masters?

A. The program should ensure the exit master's coding is available for the student to select before the [quarterly deadline to request a degree](#). Generally, if the master's code is in the same program as the Ph.D. code, the student can request the degree in MyGrad Program. If the student cannot, then the GPA can submit a petition to change degree/pathway coding.

All standard [deadlines and processes for requesting and approving a degree](#) apply to an exit masters. When approved, the degree will be posted to the student transcript and recorded as any other UW degree would. It carries no notation or indication that it is an "exit" masters – that is an internal term for the conditions under which the student choose to earn the masters when not completing a doctoral program.

Q. Can the program change the student's code on their own? Or will they need to request GEMS to change the code?

A. It depends on the circumstances, but it is not necessary for the student to be coded as a master's student to request the degree, provided the master's and Ph.D. codes are in the same program. If the student cannot select the intended exit master's degree, the GPA can submit a petition to change degree/pathway coding in MyGrad Program.

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Q. Can a student who was academically dropped from their Ph.D. program [through Policy 3.7](#) re-enter as an exit master's student at a later time?

A. No, they could not use the reinstatement process, they would need to apply and be admitted to the master's program through Grad Slate. The Graduate School continuous enrollment policy still applies. Best practice is to clearly spell out the timeline, deadlines and steps to earn an exit master's degree through the academic alert process.

Q. Are there other potential impacts to a student's tuition, funding or I-20/Visa status by taking an exit master's?

A. Yes, possibly. Students would be referred to their home program to explore and answer these questions. This should be clarified in program policy or guidance around an exit or en route master's options. Student Fiscal Services, Student Financial Aid and the International Student Services Office can be consulted for details