



St. John's College Graduate Institute Master's Essay Proposal Application

To apply for approval to write an optional Master's Essay, please submit to the Associate Dean of Graduate Programs four documents: this application form; a three to five page essay proposal with a list of the texts you propose to use in the essay; and two preceptorial essays.

Student's Name (please print): _____

Email Address: _____

Cell Phone Number: _____

Anticipated Graduation Term: _____

Your Current Term: 2nd 3rd 4th alumni

Proposed Title: _____

Advisor's Name (please print): _____

Advisor's Signature (required): _____

Signature

Date

My Master's essay will (check only one option):

- replace a preceptorial
- be submitted **in addition** to the full Master's program

Essay Proposal Application Dates

The Master's Essay proposal application must be submitted to the Associate Dean of Graduate Programs **no later than four weeks before the semester immediately preceding the essay-writing semester ends:**

- Fall Semester **Application** Deadline = July 5
- Spring Semester **Application** Deadline = November 20
- Summer Semester **Application** Deadline = April 1

Essay Submission Dates

To be eligible to receive a diploma and participate in commencement exercises at the end of the essay-writing semester, students must submit the fully written and completed Master's Essay to the Associate Dean of Graduate Programs **no later than the eighth week of the essay-writing semester:**

- Fall Semester **Completed Essay** Deadline = October 15
- Spring Semester **Completed Essay** Deadline = March 15
- Summer Semester **Completed Essay** Deadline = July 1

Students who have completed at least two segments of the graduate program and who have demonstrated considerable facility both in writing and in-class conversation may petition for permission to write an optional Master's Essay.

A Master's Essay may replace one preceptorial or it may be undertaken in addition to the full graduate program degree requirements. If choosing to replace one preceptorial, **students should be aware that opting to write a Master's Essay might delay graduation.** The Master's Essay and oral examination must both be evaluated and passed no later than the semester in which the student wishes to graduate, if the student wants to graduate on time with the Master's Essay replacing their fourth preceptorial. If, for example, a student has opted to write a Master's Essay in place of the fourth preceptorial and the submitted essay is found to be unacceptable (even after it is rewritten), then the student must complete a preceptorial to meet the graduate program degree requirements. If a student chooses to write a Master's Essay in addition to the full graduate program, the Master's Essay must be started within two years of graduation.

The Master's Essay course tuition is equal to that of one graduate course. If the Master's Essay is undertaken **as part of the degree**, replacing a preceptorial, the Master's Essay course will be billed as a standard preceptorial and any financial aid available to the student may apply to the Master's Essay course tuition. If the Master's Essay is undertaken **in addition to the degree**, after the student has graduated, the student will pay full price for the Master's Essay course tuition. The alumni discount for preceptorials and the 5th segment **does not apply** to the Master's Essay course tuition.

The student is responsible for finding a tutor to serve as an advisor during the writing of the essay. If the student doesn't know whom to ask to be the advisor, the student should speak with the Associate Dean, the Dean, or another tutor for suggestions. The student is expected to meet regularly with the faculty advisor to discuss the essay's composition and progress. A student should not expect assistance from this advisor to extend beyond the essay-writing semester. Students who choose to write a Master's Essay and begin working with an advisor, but later decide to pursue a preceptorial course, will be required to pay tuition for both the first semester of the Master's Essay course and the subsequent preceptorial course.

Step One: Submit the Essay Proposal and Application

The advisor should be consulted in the formulation of the proposal idea and must sign the proposal application form before the documents can be submitted for approval. Completed proposal packets include four items: the Master's Essay Proposal Application Form; a three to five page essay proposal with a list of the texts you propose to use in the essay; and copies of two preceptorial essays.

Proposals are submitted to the Associate Dean for Graduate Programs and evaluated by the Graduate Institute Committee on the basis of the student's academic record, writing samples, and topic description. The Graduate Institute Committee will consult with the student's tutors to determine whether the student is capable of undertaking such a demanding project.

In order to allow sufficient time for review, the proposal must be submitted to the Associate Dean of Graduate Programs no later than four weeks before the semester immediately preceding the essay-writing semester ends:

- Fall Semester **Application** Deadline = July 5
- Spring Semester **Application** Deadline = November 20
- Summer Semester **Application** Deadline = April 1

Step Two: Submit the Master's Essay

The goal of the Master's Essay should be a thoughtful examination of a text or a few texts. The essay is not intended to be a piece of specialized research, but rather a sustained performance in the liberal arts. It is expected that the Master's Essay will be 30 to 60 pages in length. This quantitative specification is meant more to reflect the expectation of a certain depth of inquiry rather than to encourage mere length or breadth. The essay should be carefully written, thoroughly edited, and clearly paginated. References to primary texts and secondary sources (if any) should be documented in a clear and consistent fashion.

Upon completion of the Master's Essay, **students will need to turn in four bound copies of the fully-written and completed Master's Essay, a PDF copy of the Master's Essay, and the library permission form.** The campus print shop can print and bind essays for students at a reasonable price. To be eligible to receive a diploma and participate in commencement exercises at the end of the essay-writing semester, students must submit the required items to the Associate Dean of Graduate Programs ***no later than the eighth week of the essay-writing semester:***

Fall Semester **Completed Essay** Deadline = October 15
Spring Semester **Completed Essay** Deadline = March 15
Summer Semester **Completed Essay** Deadline = July 1

This timeline provides the Essay Evaluation Committee members sufficient time to read the paper and the Registrar's Office enough time to schedule the oral exam. If the essay is not completed and submitted by the eighth week of the essay-writing semester, then ***a grade of Incomplete*** will be recorded on the student's official transcript and the student is not eligible to officially graduate (receive a diploma) at the end of that semester. The student must complete the essay and submit it by the eighth week of the immediately-succeeding semester. A student is only eligible to officially graduate when all degree requirements are completed. The date that will appear on the diploma is the date of the commencement ceremony that occurs **after** all degree requirements are completed.

The essay may **neither** be started more than two calendar years **after** the semester when the student completed the Master's program requirements **nor** completed more than two semesters after the semester when the proposal was originally submitted.

Step Three: The Essay Evaluation and Oral Examination

The submitted Master's Essay will then be evaluated by a specially-selected Essay Evaluation Committee comprised of three tutors, one of which will be appointed to be Chair. The Chair is appointed by the Associate Dean of Graduate Programs in the Fall and Summer and by the Assistant Dean in the Spring. Note that the student's essay-writing advisor is not eligible to be included in the Essay Evaluation Committee.

The grading scale for the Master's Essay is P-Pass or F-Fail. Careful screening of applicants through the proposal process is designed to ensure that failing grades would be extremely rare. Students whose Master's Essays are not considered passing are not eligible for the oral examination. Instead, they are given the opportunity to rewrite the essay. Students whose rewritten essays still fail to meet minimum expectations will receive no credits for the work. Instead, "Master's Essay Work" (i.e., a course with no credits in the essay-writing semester) will be recorded on the student's official transcript.

Students whose Master's Essays are considered passing are examined orally. The Master's Essay Oral Examination is an hour-long, public oral examination on the essay which is graded as H-Honors, P- Pass, or F-Fail. Students whose oral examinations fail to meet minimum expectations will receive no credits for the work. Instead, "Master's Essay Work" (i.e., a course with no credits in the essay-writing semester) will be recorded on the student's official transcript.

If both the essay and the oral examination are considered passing or honors, the grades and essay title will be recorded on the student's official transcript.