

Quality Master's Degree Checklist

The following checklist aligns the guidance for a quality Master's degree to specific areas of compliance with the standards. Use these suggested areas for further investigation and discussion with the program to ensure the quality of the degree. For example, even if a program is less than 18 months, upon further investigation it may still have a strong graduate program and meet the standards. If reviewers feel that the program is out of compliance with the standards based on the issues below, they must provide specific rationale and allow the program to provide a response.

Standard 1: Program Characteristics and Resources

RE 1.3:

- Check for financial resources: funding for adequate faculty positions, travel and scholarly work for both students and faculty
- Check for non-monetary resources: SPSS or other data analysis software, facilities on or off-campus for scholarly activities

RE 1.6:

- A typical Master's program is about **24 months**. Closely evaluate programs that are significantly shorter (**less than 18 months**) or longer (**more than 36 months**)

Standard 3: Curriculum and Learning Activities

RE 3.2:

A typical Master's program contains a **minimum of 30 hours** of didactic coursework.

- If a program has **more than 45 didactic coursework credits** (not counting SEL course credits), assess closely whether all credits are needed to fulfill competencies and Master's content (e.g. the degree is an MPH or other requirement-heavy degree)
- If **more than 20% of the curriculum is coming from SP/SEL hours**, investigate further to make sure there is strong, graduate level didactic content in the SP/SEL courses
- If **more than 12 credits or 20% of the curriculum** (whichever is larger) is **cross-listed coursework**, investigate further to assess how cross-listed courses are elevated to the Master's level
- Culminating experiences must reflect higher-level, critical thinking and scholarly work

RE 3.3:

The majority of learning activities and assessments in the curriculum should include the **application** of specialized skills using complex problem solving and critical thinking; for example, application of research or leadership should be interwoven throughout the curriculum, with a culminating experience such as a thesis or project at the end of the program.

- If the program's curriculum appears to rely heavily on knowledge-based activities and assessment, ask the program to explain how the curriculum is elevated to the Master's level.

Standard 5: Faculty and Preceptors

RE 5.1:

- If the program has **fewer than 3 faculty members**, investigate whether the program has sufficient numbers of faculty to provide the depth and breadth of learning activities required in the curriculum and exposure to the diversity of practice.
- Investigate if doctoral-level faculty are available for mentoring and teaching in the program
- For **distance programs***: if there are **more than 25 students per cohort**, investigate further to make sure there are an adequate number of faculty available to teach and mentor these students.

*For more guidance on assessing distance education programs, see the [2022 Accreditation Standards Distance Education Checklist](#) or the [FEM Distance Education Checklist](#) under "Guidance Information" on each respective website.