



**GRADUATE INSTITUTE
MASTER'S ESSAY PROPOSAL APPLICATION
St. John's College | Annapolis, Maryland**

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. Students are strongly encouraged to schedule the essay-writing semester during a regular semester, not during the summer term. Summer essay-writing requests will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

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 (tuition equal to that of one graduate course)
If the Master's Essay is intended to replace a preceptorial, then this proposal must be received four weeks before the immediately-preceding semester ends.
Please be aware that an optional Master's Essay could delay graduation.

be submitted in addition to the full Master's program (tuition equal to that of one graduate course)
If the Master's Essay will be pursued in addition to the full Master's program, then this proposal must be received four weeks before the immediately-preceding semester ends.
July 5 proposal for fall enrollment; November 20 proposal for spring enrollment
The optional Master's Essay must be started within two years of graduation.

Essay Submission Dates

Students are strongly encouraged to schedule the essay-writing semester during a regular semester, not during the summer term. To be eligible to receive a diploma and participate in commencement exercises at the end of the essay-writing semester, students must submit the full-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



GRADUATE INSTITUTE MASTER'S ESSAY GUIDELINES St. John's College | Annapolis, Maryland

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. In the former case, please be aware that writing an optional Master's Essay may delay graduation. In the latter case, the optional Master's Essay must be started within two years of graduation. In both cases, the tuition is equal to that of one graduate course. The student is responsible for finding a tutor to serve as an advisor during the writing of the essay.

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. 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. 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.

Students are strongly encouraged to schedule the essay-writing semester during a regular semester, not during the summer term. Summer essay-writing requests will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. In order to allow sufficient time for review of the proposal, the following deadline applies:

**The proposal must be received four weeks before the immediately-preceding semester ends:
Fall Proposal due July 5; Spring Proposal due November 20**

Please be aware that writing an optional Master's Essay may delay graduation. Conversely, the optional Master's Essay must be started within two years of graduation. Regardless of whether the student is replacing a preceptorial or writing the Essay in addition to the full Master's program, the student will pay tuition for the equivalent of one full three-credit course.

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.

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.

To be eligible to receive a diploma and participate in commencement exercises at the end of the essay-writing semester, students must submit the five bound copies of 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 15th
Spring Semester Completed Essay Deadline = March 15th

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

A specially-selected Essay Evaluation Committee will be 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 the 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.

Special Notes

Students should be aware that opting to write a Master’s Essay might delay graduation. 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.

Students who choose to write a Master’s Essay, 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.