Master's Presentation Guidelines

March, 2000

Students completing their Master's degree have three options to satisfy the final examination required for all graduate degrees:

1. Write and defend a Master's thesis.
3. Give a Master's Presentation.

This document provides the guidelines for Master's Presentations.

**General Description:** The purpose of the Master's Presentation is to develop your professional communication skills. If you move on to a business or industrial environment, presenting your work or ideas to your supervisor or clients will be a vital part your job skills. The importance of good communication should be obvious in academic and teaching careers. In any professional occupation, the quality of your work will be wasted if you cannot communicate it to others effectively. The Master's Presentations are intended to provide an opportunity for you to develop your professional communication skills in a supportive environment. You should view it as perhaps your first opportunity to present yourself as a professional to your colleagues. Don't view this just as a hoop to be jumped through, but as an important part of your professional training.

A student choosing the presentation option should find a faculty member who will consent to supervise his/her Master's Presentation. (Faculty may decline if they so choose.) The student's topical interests will probably guide the selection of faculty member. Academic advisors are not responsible to serve as the default supervisor if an advisee is unable to locate a supervisor. It is the student's responsibility to identify a potential supervisor and seek their consent. If they have trouble with this they may seek their advisor's suggestions for possible supervisors. Any unresolvable cases should be discussed with the Graduate Program Director.

The student and supervisor together should then identify the content of the presentation. A one-page description of the proposed project (a "project proposal") must be given to the graduate secretary at least six weeks prior to the presentation. The student and the advisor must sign the proposal. The presentation itself is to consist of a 50-minute oral exposition, delivered to an audience of faculty and fellow graduate students, accompanied by a professional quality written summary. The content might be based on reading a journal article (current or of historical significance), perhaps appropriate chapters from a book, or a study project that the student has carried out while in the graduate program. The basic idea is that the presentation represents some mathematical learning accomplished outside of formal course work, either through some reading or project related work. The supervisor is the final authority on what is acceptable and what is not.

The written summary need not be a full written treatment of the presentation topic. Again the supervisor will determine what level of detail and completeness is appropriate, and insure that professional standards for attributing credit and providing references are followed. However the written summary should be of professional quality, produced with TeX, LaTeX or other
publication quality resources. We anticipate that the summary be from 2 - 12 pages in length. A written copy of the summary should be provided to the Graduate Program Committee at the time of the oral presentation.

The preparation of the presentation is not intended to be a project of the magnitude of a Master's thesis. It should roughly replace the time the student would (or should) have spent in preparation for the written Master's exam of years past. A major difference is that the Master's presentation is not intended to serve an evaluative purpose. There will not be a panel of judges at the presentation to decide if the student passes or fails. Each supervisor sets the standard of acceptability individually. Instead, the purpose of the presentation is to insure that our graduates have some experience with independent learning, and with professional communication skills. In considering what might constitute a failure of the presentation requirement, the GPC can only imagine situations in which students simply did not prepare in earnest. We hope to prevent that from happening by periodic checks with the supervisor.

**Scheduling and Attendance:** Students should identify their faculty supervisor in the semester prior to the presentation. We expect each student intending to give a presentation to be able to identify his/her faculty supervisor and give some initial indication of the topic by the end of the semester, on their annual Graduate Student Activity Report, if not sooner. Faculty supervisors will be expected to confirm their consent with a signature. Students who have not identified a supervisor by that point will be considered to be behind schedule. This is to insure that the holiday break is available for preparing presentations.

The presentations will be announced and open to the public. Students giving presentations are expected to attend the presentations given by others, except where class conflicts prevent it.

Since the presentation constitutes your final exam you must officially register for it with the Graduate School by filling out a request for final exam form at least two weeks prior to your official exam date. Your official exam date can be after the date of your actual presentation. You must complete both the oral presentation and written summary on or by the official exam date. On the official exam date you will go to the Graduate School to pick up the exam card which must be signed by your advisory committee and returned to certify that you have satisfied the requirement.

The Master's Presentation falls within the nonthesis degree option, not the thesis option. Thus students using a Master's Presentation to satisfy the final examination requirement may not use 5994 hours on their program of study.

Any concerns or questions associated with these Master's Presentations should be brought to the Graduate Program Director.
Summary Timeline

- **The semester before the presentation:** Arrange for a faculty member to be your advisor and choose a topic. Report this progress on your GSAR if this is done in the Fall semester.

- **Six weeks before the presentation:** Submit a one-page description of the proposed presentation to the graduate secretary. You and your advisor should sign the proposal.

- **Two weeks before the presentation:** Fill out the "request for final exam form" at the graduate school, giving your presentation date as the date of the exam.

- **The day of the presentation:** Pick up the final exam card at the graduate school. Give your oral presentation. Submit your written report to the graduate secretary. (Your advisor will sign the card when these are completed.) Return the card to the graduate school.