UNIVERSITY ASSEMBLY BILL 20-3

A BILL TO REVISE UNIVERSITY REQUIREMENTS
GOVERNING CLOSURE FOR THE MASTER’S DEGREE

12-14-90       Approved by the Graduate Council
04-12-91       Approved as amended by the Faculty Senate
04-12-91       Mailed to Student Senate
04-12-91       Mailed to Staff Senate
04-26-91       Approved as amended by the University Assembly

Section 1. This bill establishes five closure options and a standard closure process for academic programs granting the master’s degree. The bill is intended to encourage innovative and educationally legitimate variations in the curricula of academic programs.

Section 2. This Bill supersedes the statement on “Master’s Project” on page 61 of the 1989-90 SSU Catalogue for Undergraduates and Graduates.

Section 3. Uniform Closure Process

Master’s degrees will be awarded only to students who have satisfactorily completed a closure exercise prescribed by their academic program. Closure exercises will generally occur during latter half of the student’s course of study, due to the comprehensive and integrative nature of master’s studies.

Closure exercises may carry up to eight (8) semester hours of credit, as deemed appropriate by the Program.

All closure exercises must include a written component, which is produced according to the technical guidelines prescribed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs in consultation with the Graduate Council, and which is housed in the University Archive upon final approval.

All closure exercises as set forth below in Section 4, paragraphs A, B, and C must be approved by a Closure Committee that will consist of at least three persons, including the Student’s thesis/project advisor and two or more additional faculty members. At least one of the faculty members may be selected by the student. One of the faculty members must come from outside the Program and be appointed by the appropriate Dean after consultation with the thesis/project advisor. The Closure Committee for a comprehensive examination closure option, may in addition include all Student’s instructors participating in preparation of the examination, as determined by the Program.

The Closure Committee is constituted to approve the closure exercise in both its initial developmental stage and in its final form. Proposals for theses and graduate projects must be approved in writing by Closure Committees established for each student,
which shall meet prior to action. Comprehensive examinations shall be approved by the
Program Closure Committee. When all elements of the closure exercise have been
satisfactorily completed, each member of the Closure Committee shall sign the Closure
Approval Form, which is attached to the written portion of the closure exercise and
submitted to the Dean of the School in which the program resides.

Section 4. Closure Options

A. The Master’s Thesis
A master’s thesis represents a sustained research essay, original in either its
research material or mode of integration, written individually by a student, on an
approved topic germane to the field in which the master’s degree is awarded. Standards
for master’s theses are set by academic programs and are subject to review by the School
Curriculum Committee and the Graduate Council.

B. The Graduate Project
A graduate project is an applied study germane to the field in which the master’s
degree is awarded. Graduate projects normally combine the subject-matter of academic
programs with problems or issues in practical professional settings of concern to an
academic program. Standards for graduate projects are set by academic programs and are
subject to review by the School Curriculum Committee and the Graduate Council.

C. The Comprehensive Examination
A comprehensive examination consisting of written exams based on all course
subjects studies by the student exclusive of Public Affairs Colloquia (PAC’s), tests the
candidate’s integration of various dimensions of a field of study; the comprehensive
exam may include an oral portion. Standards for comprehensive examinations are set by
academic programs, subject to review by the School Curriculum Committee and the
Graduate Council.

D. The Creative/Artistic Work Product
The creative/artistic work product consists of the creation of an original work
which employs and synthesizes principles, theories and techniques from the student’s
graduate education; generally the work should exhibit aesthetic value and be
accompanied by a written explication and/or criticism. Standards for creative/artistic
work products are set by academic programs and are subject to review by the School
Curriculum Committee and the Graduate Council.

E. The Capstone Course
The capstone course is an integrative course utilizing theoretical and applied
aspects of the relevant discipline and shall include a major writing component such as a
case study, project, or examination. Standards for capstone courses are set by academic
programs and subject to review by the School Curriculum Committee and the Graduate
Council.
F. Exceptions

Exceptions to the foregoing closure options may be proposed by a Program, reviewed by the School Curriculum Committee, and approved by the Graduate Council if deemed necessary and desirable, upon demonstration by an academic program that its proposed exception to closure options: (1) is consistent with prevailing standards in the relevant professional and academic disciplines; or (2) implements the intent of this bill.

Section 5. Implementation

All academic programs awarding the master's degree must submit standards e.g., guidelines specifying means of assuring the quality of masters closure exercises from the initial developmental stage to the final approval stage, and procedures for their closure requirements to School Curriculum Committees for review by the end of semester following the semester in which this bill is enacted. The SCCs will review the standards and procedures for quality and consistency and will forward them to the Graduate Council, which will review the standards for the consistency with which they reflect the terms of this bill and approve them for inclusion in the next Catalogue for Undergraduates and Graduates.

Master’s program review statements written for University approval in AY 1993-94 and subsequent years must include assessment of the closure requirement.