

Response to ASCC Natural and Mathematical Sciences Subcommittee Feedback for Proposal

1. Statistics MS

- a. The Subcommittee asks the department to verify the wording in the proposal regarding the MS non-thesis as a steppingstone to the PhD program. The current wording gives the impression that the department is excluding MS thesis students from the PhD. If the department does not mean to imply this, the Subcommittee advises them to open the statement up by saying that the MS program can be a steppingstone to the PhD or to include the means by which MS thesis students can qualify for the program (if the requirements for them are meant to be different from the non-thesis students). [Proposal pg. 6]

Following the suggestion, we changed the sentence from “The Non-thesis route may serve as a steppingstone to the Ph.D. degree if later admitted to the Ph.D. program.” to “The Non-thesis route may better serve as a steppingstone to the Ph.D. degree if later admitted to the Ph.D. program.” The non-thesis route (passing the MS exam) is clearly better than the thesis route for those MS students who may continue to the PhD program, and that is consistent with how we advise MS students. It is because PhD students in our program are required to pass the MS exam at a high level as their first qualifying exam, and the second qualifying exam can be attempted only after the first qualifying exam has been passed. For this reason, while we do not exclude MS thesis students from the PhD, the thesis route will take much longer for students to fulfill the requirements for the PhD program. As an additional piece of information, most of our MS students take the non-thesis option, and with proper advising, to this date, there hasn’t been a single MS thesis student who went on to the PhD program.

- b. The Subcommittee would like the department to describe how, if at all, they are working with the Graduate School to address the conflict of the timing of the MS exam and student enrollment requirements given that Spring semester ends in April and the exam is in May.
- c. The Subcommittee is concerned that the exam is not in concurrence with the Graduate School’s definition of a master’s exam and asks if the Graduate School has approved the details of the MS exam for the department. See section 6.2 of the Graduate School handbook <https://gradsch.osu.edu/all/graduate-school-handbook-gsh#section6.2>.

Comments b and c are about the timing of the MS exam in our department. As stated in the proposal p.2, the MS program in statistics is designed to serve students who obtain an MS degree en route to a PhD in statistics or biostatistics as well as those who complete their education at the master's level. Because of this dual purpose, the coursework for the first year of the MS program and PhD program are identical, and the MS exam is designed to assess students' mastery of the core courses in the first year. The exam is scheduled for May following their first year, with a second chance in August if needed. This timing is *critical* for guiding both MS and PhD students in selecting their second-year courses based on their MS exam results. This MS exam arrangement was formally approved by the Graduate School during the semester conversion. With the Subcommittee's request, we sought confirmation from the Graduate School that the Graduate School supports the current exam arrangement for the MS program, which has proven to be successful for many years since semester conversion. The Associate Dean Maria Miriti immediately responded to our request positively as in the attached letter.